THE DISCIPLE'S COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS

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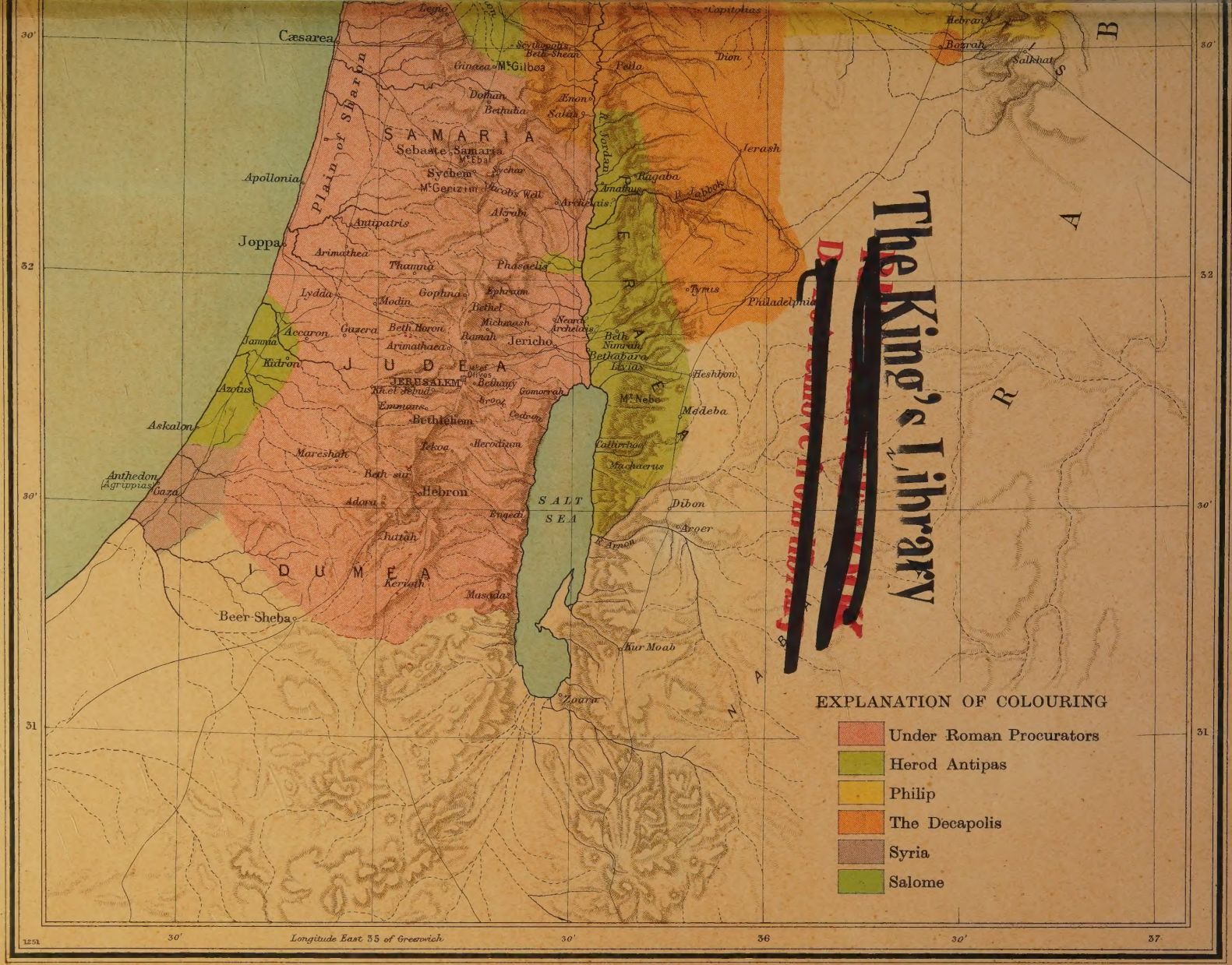

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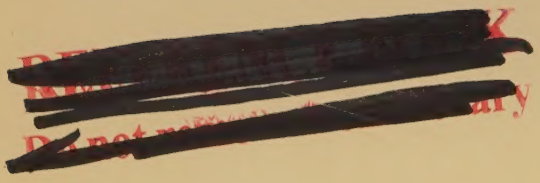

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The disciple's commentary on the New Testament

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THE DISCIPLE'S COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS : : : *By DAVID SMITH, D.D.* : : IN THREE VOLUMES : : VOLUME ONE : : THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW WITH INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS : : : : : : : : :

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IN

GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF

ERNEST HODDER-WILLIAMS

PREFACE

"IF according to the Apostle Paul," says St. Jerome in the preface to his commentary on his Latin version of Isaiah, "Christ is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' and one who knows not the Scriptures knows not God's power and His wisdom, ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." Since, as all will confess who know Him and the blessed difference which He makes in human lives, there is no loss comparable to ignorance of Christ, the interpretation of the Scriptures which testify of Him is a truly beneficent work; and it was a happy thought of my friend the late Sir Ernest Hodder-Williams that it were well if one did for our generation, with its changed outlook and its unchanged need of the changeless Saviour, what Matthew Henry did for his when over two centuries ago he wrote his monumental Exposition, so greatly owned of God and prized by our godly fathers—a work of large erudition, practical wisdom, and fragrant piety, abounding in quaint aphorisms and passages of literary beauty. Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton honoured me with an invitation to make at least a beginning of the task, and in its performance I have been animated by a desire not alone to glorify our Lord but to execute not unworthily the design of my departed friend.

This is a disciple's commentary, written by a disciple of the Heavenly Master, who has spent long years in

continual study of the sacred record of His revelation of grace and truth and would fain share with his fellow-disciples, learned and unlearned alike, the rich treasure which he has discovered there; and its purpose has imposed two inevitable limitations.

1. The avoidance of technical discussion of critical questions which, important as they are and appropriate to the schools, are in Hamlet's phrase "caviare to the general." All that is permissible here is a statement of conclusions. And indeed no more is required; for scholarly readers, aware of the critical problems, will recognise that these have always been before my mind and that my conclusions, whether they approve them or not, are deliberate and considered judgments.

2. The employment, as the material of exposition, not of the Greek text but of an English translation. Here again scholars, at home in the original, will supply the defect; nor will they greatly deplore it. For is it not significant that the Old Testament which our Lord and His Apostles employed was not the Hebrew text but the Greek version of the Septuagint, which in those days when the ancient Hebrew was a dead language was for them very much what the Authorised Version is for ourselves? In truth in the reading of Scripture a scholar versed in the originals has no essential advantage over the plain man who knows only his mother tongue. For both alike read the Word of God, and all the difference is that the one reads it in the words of Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists, while the other reads it in the words of King James's Translators.

It is their Version that is presented here; and what other is so fit? Not only is it endeared to us by long

familiarity and hallowed memories; not only does it rank with Shakespeare and Milton as an immortal classic of that noble English which is our heritage from "the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth"; but despite errors, mainly textual, which the science of Textual Criticism has rectified, it serves the office of a translation, especially in its rendering of the Gospels, as no other Version does. One familiar with the Common Greek, the language of our Lord and the men who wrote of Him, must recognise how the very spirit of the original breathes in its diction, so homely, sweet, and often racy, never pedantic or trivial or absurd.

The preservation as footnotes of its marginal renderings and explanations is no useless encumbrance of our pages, since they are always suggestive and not infrequently possess a historical interest. For example, the disparity between their monetary valuations in terms of contemporary English currency and the modern valuations as stated in the exposition aptly illustrates Macaulay's estimate of the wages of the common people in his great chapter on "The State of England in 1685."

"Translation it is," wrote King James's Translators in that literary master-piece, their address to the Reader, "that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water." And right nobly have they accomplished this their most needful office. But, adds Matthew Henry, vindicating the subsequent and scarce less needful office of the expositor, "when the

stone is rolled from the well's mouth by a critical explication of the text, still there are those who would both drink themselves and water their flocks ; but they complain that ' the well is deep ' and they ' have nothing to draw with ' ; how then shall they ' come by this living water ' ? Some such may, perhaps, find a bucket here, or water drawn to their hands ; and pleased enough shall I be with this office of the Gibeonites, to ' draw water for the congregation of the Lord ' out of these wells of salvation."

Therefore it is that these pages have been written ; and in writing them I have constantly had three classes especially in view : preachers and teachers and, moreover, the multitude of those who in their reading of the Scriptures feel, like the Ethiopian of old, their need of some man to guide them, that they may understand what they read. My hope is that such may read their " daily portions " as these are presented here, and reading therewith what I have written may the better appreciate the sacred story " to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

DAVID SMITH.

COLLEGE PARK, BELFAST.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

For me the archives are Jesus Christ, the inviolate archives are His Cross and His Death and His Resurrection and the Faith which is through Him.

ST. IGNATIUS.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

AS the Christian Fathers were wont to speak of the Greek Version of the Old Testament as "the Old Testament according to the Seventy," hereby proclaiming it merely a translation, not the very Scriptures of the Old Covenant but those Scriptures as construed by the seventy scholars who had rendered them in the *lingua franca* of later days when even for Jews the ancient Hebrew was a dead language, so also in dealing with the fourfold record of our Lord's earthly life they spoke of "the Gospel according to" this or that Evangelist, recognising that no human heart could comprehend, no human lips express the full wonder of that infinite revelation of grace and truth. And so the Apostles themselves confessed. "That which we have seen and heard," says St. John (1 Jo. i. 3), "declare we unto you." "What we could receive we wrote" said St. Peter according to an uncanonical record. And what says St. Paul? "We know in part, and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. xiii. 9). And in like manner each of the Evangelists has written only what he could receive. Each had found in the Saviour's boundless grace the satisfaction which he craved, and each has testified simply what the Saviour was to himself in his own blessed experience. And thus we have the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Gospel according to

St. Mark, the Gospel according to St. Luke, and the Gospel according to St. John.

Each of the Evangelists presents his own conception of the Divine Master, his own appreciation of the infinite treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Him; and their several conceptions are well defined by an old fancy, which has figured largely in devotional literature and religious art, suggested by the mystical language of the Hebrew Prophet and more especially his successor, the Christian Seer who in the Isle of Patmos beheld "in the midst of the Throne and round about the Throne four living creatures, the first like a lion, the second like a calf, the third having a face as of a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle" (Ezk. i. 4-10; Rev. iv. 6-8). The interpreters of later days recognised in those living creatures emblems of the four Evangelists; and St. Augustine, differing from others in his application of the imagery, took the lion as the emblem of St. Matthew, the man as the emblem of St. Mark, the calf as the emblem of St. Luke, and the eagle as the emblem of St. John. It is indeed a quaint fancy, yet its idea is profoundly true and richly suggestive.

1. The lion was accounted of old "the King of the Beasts"; and it most fitly symbolised St. Matthew inasmuch as he, the Jewish Evangelist, had for his supreme purpose the commendation of our Lord as the Messiah, "the King of Israel." He begins his Gospel with a genealogy which traces our Lord's descent back in the first instance to David, the great King, and thence to Abraham, the father of the faithful, thus proving Him at once the Heir of the ancient throne and the Fulfiller of the ancient Promise. Again,

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in telling the story of our Lord's earthly ministry he continually pauses to point out how each incident had been foreshadowed by the prophets of old : " All this hath come to pass that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet " ; " Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through the prophet." And again he is careful to preserve sayings of our Lord evincing His reverent regard for the ancient Law (cf. iii. 14, 15, v. 17-20, xvii. 25-27). He had not come to destroy it but to fulfil it ; He was scrupulous in observing its ordinances ; and He required not a less but a greater righteousness than it prescribed. And thus in accepting Him the Jews would abandon nothing of their sacred heritage.

The title " the Gospel according to St. Matthew " is merely traditional ; and it is beyond question that, as it stands, the Gospel was not written by the Apostle Matthew. The main evidence is that on the testimony of Papias of Hierapolis, a hearer of St. John during the latter's long ministry in the Province of Asia and a comrade of the martyr Polycarp—a testimony presently confirmed by St. Irenæus—what the Apostle actually wrote was not a Gospel but rather a collection of our Lord's sayings, and he wrote it not in Greek but in Aramaic, the Jewish vernacular of that period. The language of our " Gospel according to St. Matthew " is Greek, and the frequent occurrence on its pages of plays upon Greek words proves that it is not a translation of an Aramaic original.

What then is the reason of its traditional title ? It was of old, as Iamblichus tells us in his life of Pythagoras, the fashion with disciples, in acknowledgment of the

debt which they owed their master, to ascribe their writings to him and publish them in his name; and so it happened with our Gospel. It was written by a disciple of the Apostle Matthew, one who, "loving to be unknown and to be made of no reputation," ascribed his work to the revered master who had taught him all he knew. And it is important to observe that in writing it he made use of his master's Aramaic book. That book was written for the instruction of the Apostle's disciples; and it is said that he wrote it, possibly as early as the year 41, when he was leaving Jerusalem to preach abroad in obedience to the Lord's command (cf. Mt. xxviii. 19). It was a private manual, and it soon disappeared; but St. Jerome (331-420) tells us that a copy of it had survived to his day in a Syrian monastery. He saw it there and examined it, and among other coincidences he observed in it two peculiar testimonies which occur also in our Gospel's initial narrative of the Lord's Birth and Infancy (cf. ii. 15, 23). And hence it appears that this much disputed narrative was derived from the Apostle Matthew's Aramaic book and bears the stamp of his attestation.

The *motif* of the Gospel approximately fixes its date. The chronicler Eusebius records that ere the investment of Jerusalem by the army of Titus in the year 70 the Christian community, "in accordance with a certain oracle given by revelation to the approved men there," quitted the doomed city and sought an asylum in the Peræan town of Pella. Our Evangelist would be one of these refugees. From that haven of security he watched the tragedy; and when the issue was determined, he seized the opportunity of appealing to his

distressed compatriots—not the Palestinians merely, else he would, like his master, have written in Aramaic nor would he have needed to interpret Hebrew phrases (cf. i. 23; xxvii. 33), but all the widely dispersed citizens of the Sacred Commonwealth. His hope was that in the day of their calamity they would "look upon Him whom they had pierced and mourn for Him," and at length recognise Him as the Messiah, their Promised Redeemer.

2. St. Mark's emblem is the Man. And indeed it is most fitting. His Gospel is at once the briefest and the simplest of the four. Its theme is the ministry of our Lord, and it plunges at once *in medias res* with no prologue, no genealogy, no account of His parentage or birth or preparation. It has no *motif*, no theological thesis or apologetic intention. It portrays Him simply as He appeared while He lived and laboured here, as a Man among men sharing their full humanity, yet withal a Man who was ever "as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." It is the story of His ministry, and its keynote is that oft recurring word which, always the same in the original, is variously rendered in our Version "straightway," "forthwith," "immediately." Glance over the pages, and see how it introduces every paragraph. "Straightway coming up out of the water"; "Straightway the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness"; "Straightway they forsook their nets"; "Straightway He called them"; "Straightway on the Sabbath Day He entered into the synagogue." And so on every page of the eager narrative as it presses

toward its goal, telling of One who had a work to do and was in haste to accomplish it, having "no leisure so much as to eat."

It illumines this characteristic of the Gospel that, on the sure testimony of Papias and St. Irenæus, the Evangelist John Mark derived his material from the Apostle Peter. Beginning his career by serving, with small credit to himself, as St. Paul's "minister" or "attendant" in his first mission (cf. Ac. xiii. 5, 13, xv. 37-39), he afterwards right well retrieved his good name. He attached himself to St. Peter who had known him in the hospitable home of his mother Mary at Jerusalem (cf. Ac. xii. 12) and had there won the lad for the Saviour (cf. 1 Pet. v. 13). The story is that he attended the great Apostle on his mission to Rome and heard his expositions of the sayings and doings of our Lord; and after his master's martyrdom in the year 67 he, at the request of the brethren in the imperial capital, committed to writing what he had learned from his lips, "making it his one care," says Papias, "not to omit aught of the things which he had heard or to falsify anything among them."

And thus the Gospel according to St. Mark might justly be designated rather the Gospel according to St. Peter. And it breathes the very spirit of the generous, impetuous, impulsive Apostle. He had observed, inasmuch as it accorded well with his own disposition, the zeal of the Divine Master, His constant, unresting, unwearied devotion to the work which had been given Him to do; and this is the conception which he impressed on the mind of his young disciple, the future Evangelist. Hence it is that, while St. Matthew

has portrayed the Saviour as "the King of Israel," St. Mark has portrayed Him as the realisation of the prophetic ideal of "the Servant of the Lord." "Behold My servant whom I uphold; My Chosen, in whom My soul delighteth: I have put My Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

3. The emblem of St. Luke is the Calf, characterising him, since the calf was a sacrificial victim (cf. Lev. ix. 2; Heb. ix. 19), as the priestly Evangelist. At the first glance it may seem singularly inappropriate; and it in no wise suffices to justify it that, as St. Augustine observes, the Gospel begins with the stories of the old priest Zacharias and his days of ministration in the Temple and the Virgin Mother's offering of purification. For in truth of all the Gospels it is the least conversant with sacrificial ritual. How could it be otherwise? St. Luke, the physician of Antioch—Antioch in Pisidia and not Syrian Antioch, as is commonly supposed—was a Gentile, the only Gentile among the sacred writers, and knew nothing by personal experience of "the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain."

Yet a little reflection discovers in the emblem a peculiar appropriateness and a profound significance. The Evangelist was a disciple and a devoted friend of St. Paul, who won him for Christ in the year 47 in the course of his first mission in southern Galatia and moulded his thought during their close and affectionate intimacy which continued until the Apostle's martyrdom in the year 67. He was indeed, in Tertullian's phrase, "the illuminator of Luke"; and what was the light

which he enkindled in his disciple's soul? He was "the Apostle of the Gentiles," proclaiming the wideness of God's mercy, His universal purpose of redemption, and His especial care for the sinful and despised, in a word, His "love"—that love from which nothing in time or eternity shall be able to separate us, "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," or "grace"—"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," "the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." And the disciple caught his master's spirit. His Gospel, justly styled by Renan "the most beautiful book in the world," is the Gospel of Grace. The word—so frequent in the Pauline Epistles, where it occurs ninety-eight times—is never mentioned by St. Matthew or St. Mark and never by St. John save thrice in his Prologue, whereas it occurs eight times in the Gospel according to St. Luke and seventeen times in his Book of Acts. And he not merely speaks of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ": he exhibits it. And his solicitude herein appears most impressively in the nature of those incidents of our Lord's ministry which his diligent investigation (cf. i. 1-4) has rescued from oblivion, being, as they invariably are, moving exemplifications of His compassion for the sinful, the unfortunate, and the despised.

Our Lord's attitude toward the sinful illustrates the fundamental difference between Him and contemporary Jewish teachers. Two classes were coupled in common parlance—"the Publicans," those godless agents of the Roman tyranny, and "the Sinners," harlots and social pariahs generally; and the Pharisees viewed these as unclean outcasts whose very touch was a pollution.

But our Lord dealt kindly with them, going even to their houses and reclining at table with them, insomuch that He was styled "the Friend of Publicans and Sinners." His grace toward the sinful appealed to St. Luke, and he has preserved not a few instances which but for him would have gone unrecorded. One is the story of the sinful woman who loved much because she was much forgiven (vii. 36-50). Then there is the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (xviii. 9-14); and again the story of Zacchæus, the chief publican of Jericho (xix. 1-10). His grace toward such was an offence to the Pharisees, who construed it as an evidence that He was Himself a sinner at heart; and St. Luke has preserved His refutation of the calumny (xv)—those immortal parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Groat, and the Lost Son, which proclaim that a sinner is a lost treasure of God, precious in His sight and dear to His heart, and true holiness a Godlike compassion.

His defence was indeed a heavy condemnation of the Pharisees, and St. Matthew and St. Mark constantly represent Him as their uncompromising adversary, indignantly denouncing their traditionalism, their hypocrisy, and their arrogance. And this is true, yet it is not the whole truth. For while He sternly censured the Pharisees, He recognised that they too were lost sons of God and they too had a place in His heart. And this side of the picture St. Luke and St. Luke alone has disclosed, exhibiting Him as the Friend of Pharisees no less than of Publicans and Sinners, seeking their faith and sometimes winning it. Thrice has he told how Pharisees bade Him to their tables and He

accepted their hospitality (cf. vii. 36-50, xi. 37, 38, xiv. 1-24).

Again, the grace of our Lord was manifested in His attitude toward the unfortunate, especially the poor, so numerous in those days of national humiliation and grinding oppression; and St. Luke has preserved several impressive examples. One is the parable of the Rich Fool (xii. 13-21), illustrating the vanity of unsanctified possessions; and another the parable of the Rich Man and the Beggar (xvi. 19-31), showing the future recompense of the godly poor. And then there is his version of the Beatitudes (vi. 20, 21). "Blessed," he writes, "are ye poor, ye that hunger now," omitting St. Matthew's interpretative gloss "poor *in spirit*," "hunger *after righteousness*" (v. 3, 6).

Once more, see how he exemplifies our Lord's grace toward the despised, especially two classes—Samaritans and women. "Jews had no dealings with Samaritans" (Jo. iv. 9); but racial animosity had no place in our Lord's heart, and St. Luke records instances of His attitude toward those despised aliens—His rebuke of James and John when they proposed to call down fire from heaven on an inhospitable village (ix. 51-56), the parable of the Good Samaritan (x. 25-37), and the incident of the grateful Samaritan leper (xvii. 12-19). Women too were lightly esteemed. A Jew was forbidden to "multiply discourse" with a woman, even his wife or daughter or sister; the women sat apart in the synagogues; and in the Morning Prayer the men blessed God that it had pleased Him to make them Jews and not Gentiles, free and not slaves, men and not women. Forasmuch as they were thus despised,

our Lord had a chivalrous regard for womankind; and St. Luke, the most gentlemanly of the sacred writers, observed this characteristic of the Master and has recorded numerous examples—the stories of the widow of Nain (vii. 11-15), the penitent woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee (vii. 36-50), the women who ministered to Him and His disciples of their substance (viii. 1-3), the supper in the home at Bethany where Martha served and Mary sat at His feet (x. 38-42), the woman who blessed the mother that bore Him (xi. 27, 28), and those daughters of Jerusalem who bewailed and lamented Him on His way to Calvary (xxiii. 27-29). Indeed it appears that he cultivated a special intimacy with the survivors of the womenfolk who had known our Lord in the days of His flesh, and heard from their lips those tender reminiscences which distinguish his gracious narrative. Observe, for example, the manifest difference betwixt his narrative of the Nativity and St. Matthew's—how he tells the story from Mary's point of view, while the Jewish Evangelist tells it from Joseph's.

And now appears the profound truth of that ancient fancy which saw in the calf of the sin offering a fitting emblem of the Gospel according to St. Luke. Forasmuch as it is the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, it is the sacrificial Gospel. For what is sacrifice? It is not the priest or the bleeding victim or the crimson altar; for these are but symbols, and the reality lies in the sinner's penitence and God's answering mercy. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." And St. Luke's is the sacrificial

Gospel because it is the Gospel that tells of the Love which is ever seeking poor sinners in their guilt and misery, and the Grace which can cleanse the foulest stain and heal the sorest wound.

And what of the Gospel's date? It is indeed most probable that when St. Paul spoke of "the brother whose praise in the Gospel was spread through all the churches" (2 Cor. viii. 18), he was referring to St. Luke; but quite untenable is the notion of early days that when he speaks elsewhere (Rom. ii. 16, xvi. 25; 2 Tim. ii. 8) of "my Gospel," he means, not merely the Gospel which he preached, but the Gospel which his beloved disciple had written as he learned it from his lips. For that would imply that the Gospel according to St. Luke had already appeared in the Apostle's life-time as early as the year 57; whereas it was certainly after the fall of Jerusalem that it was written. Observe, for example, how in his report of our Lord's discourse on things to come, for the Jewish phrase "the abomination of desolation" (Mt. xxiv. 15; Mk. xiii. 14) so significant to Jewish but unintelligible to Gentile readers, the Gentile Evangelist has (xxi. 20) "when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies," interpreting the vague prediction in terms of its actual accomplishment.

Hence it appears that he wrote his Gospel not during the lifetime of his beloved master but after his martyrdom in the year 67 and after the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70; and of his later career unfortunately no record has survived beyond a few vague suggestions. Thus it is alleged by St. Jerome that he composed his Gospel "in the regions of Achaia and Bœotia"; and

this is very credible inasmuch as it is a Gospel for Greeks. And it furnishes a clue to its approximate date that the Gospel is merely the first part of a work which he had planned on the rise and progress of Christianity down to his own day (cf. exposition of i. 1-4). The Book of Acts is the second part; and, as it stands, it is an unfinished work. It was doubtless his death that arrested his labour, and the question is when his death occurred. There is a Latin prologue to his Gospel, dating probably early in the third century, where it is stated that he died at the age of seventy-four. Unfortunately there is no evidence of the date of his birth; but his truly filial relation to St. Paul would suggest that he was considerably younger than the Apostle. The latter was forty-seven years of age in the year 47 when he first encountered the young physician practising his profession at Pisidian Antioch; and if Luke were then some thirty years of age, his death at the age of seventy-four would fall about the year 90. Since he left his Book of Acts unfinished, it is likely that his Gospel, the preceding part of his great work, had appeared about the year 85.

4. The emblem of St. John is the Eagle, "the bird of heaven," as it was called of old by reason of its lofty flight, its keen eye which gazes undazzled on the sun, and its perennial vigour which still, said the ancient fable, renewed its youth for a hundred years (cf. Ps. ciii. 5). And what else than an eagle's flight is the Evangelist's story of the Word made flesh, beginning in the ageless Eternity and sweeping down to "the smoke and stir of this dim spot, which men call earth," to soar upward again, in a magnificent circuit,

Beyond the glittering starry globe
Far as the eternal hills,
Where, in the boundless worlds of light,
Our great Redeemer dwells ?

And who was the Evangelist ? It is characteristic of the sacred writers, evincing their reverence for their august theme, that none of our Gospels bears its author's signature. Our Evangelist is no less reticent than his fellows, yet it is remarkable that in the very studiousness of his self-effacement he has dropped suggestions which to an observant eye clearly reveal his identity. Twice over in the course of his narrative in order to commend it to the reader's faith there is inserted a pointed and emphatic affirmation of his credentials. First, after telling of the piercing of our Lord's side while He hung dead on the cross, " He that hath seen it," says the Evangelist (xix. 35), " hath borne witness, and his witness is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe." And again, to " make assurance double sure," at the close of the Gospel (xxi. 24) an attestation is entered, not by the Evangelist himself but by his fellow-presbyters. He has just been telling for the last time of that Apostle whom he styles " the disciple whom Jesus loved " ; and they write : " This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things and which wrote these things ; and we know that his witness is true." Observe what it is that is here claimed for the Evangelist. It is that he possessed a fourfold qualification for his task : he had been an eye-witness of all that he relates ; he had been a disciple of the Lord ; he was one of the Twelve Apostles ; and he

was that Apostle who had enjoyed so peculiar an intimacy with the Master that he was known as "the disciple whom He loved." And the question is whether it be possible to determine which of the Twelve he was. Consider the data, and see whither they point.

In the epistle which he wrote as the "covering letter" of his Gospel, our Evangelist claims to have been an eye-witness of the Lord's ministry "from the beginning" (cf. 1 Jo. i. 1); and hence it follows that he belonged to that group of five disciples whom the Lord won at the very outset immediately after His baptism in the Jordan (cf. Jo. i. 35-51). These were Andrew and his brother Simon, Philip, Nathanael, and a fifth who is here significantly unnamed. Which of these was the Evangelist? It narrows the choice that, since he was not merely an Apostle but "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he belonged to the inner circle of the Twelve, the three who had won the Master's special confidence—Simon Peter and the brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee. And which of the three was he? James is eliminated, since he was not one of the five, and moreover he suffered early martyrdom (cf. Ac. xii. 2). And so is Simon, since he is repeatedly distinguished from "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (cf. xiii. 23, 24, xxi. 20). And thus it remains that the Evangelist was the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, that early disciple whom he so studiously refrains from naming.

It is no slight corroboration of this inferential evidence that, though the Gospel is distinguished by its luminous portraiture not alone of the Twelve but of other friends and companions of our Lord who but for it would

have passed into oblivion, it never so much as mentions the name of John the son of Zebedee. He figures largely in the other Gospels, but were the fourth Gospel the sole record, his very existence would be unknown. This reticence is inexplicable save on the understanding that he was the Evangelist; and then it appears as a conspicuous example of the accustomed self-effacement of the sacred biographers in their presentation of the Divine Master. And if John was indeed the Evangelist, he is plainly recognisable under the thin disguise of " another disciple," " the disciple whom Jesus loved."

And how came he to write the Gospel? Here tradition is explicit. After the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 the surviving Apostles fixed their abodes in various quarters. John settled at Ephesus and during the remainder of his life exercised an active and fruitful ministry throughout the Roman Province of Asia. It is remarkable how long-lived were " the great luminaries " of the Asian churches, and how they retained their physical and intellectual powers unimpaired to the last. A distinguished disciple of the Apostle was Polycarp of Smyrna, who at his martyrdom had " served Christ fourscore and six years," being thus a very old man if the years be reckoned from his birth, and older still if they be reckoned from his conversion. And there was his younger contemporary Pothinus, who was over ninety years of age at his martyrdom during the persecution at Vienne and Lyons under Marcus Aurelius in the year 177. John's longevity matched theirs. He survived according to St. Irenæus until the reign of Trajan (98-117), dying, it is further stated, in the year 104. It was in extreme old age that he wrote

his Gospel; and the story is that he wrote it at the entreaty of his disciples and fellow-workers, that when he, the last survivor of the men who had been with Jesus, was gone, they might retain a permanent memorial of his precious testimony.

> If I live yet, it is for good, more love
> Through me to men: be nought but ashes here
> That keep awhile my semblance, who was John,—
> Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth
> No one alive who knew (consider this!)
> —Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
> That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
> How will it be when none more saith "I saw"?

And therefore he wrote his Gospel. But, it is further alleged, what he wrote was not a complete narrative of the Lord's earthly ministry. For "the three previously written Gospels had already been delivered, and, they say, he accepted these and testified to their truth"; and he recorded only "the time which the earlier Evangelists had passed over in silence and the things which had been done by the Saviour in the course thereof."

> Imminent was the outcry "Save our Christ!"
> Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life
> Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work.

Is it possible to determine more precisely the date of the Gospel? Consider the evidence of contemporary literature, more particularly the epistles of the Apostolic Fathers, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna. Clement died in the year 100, the third year of the reign of Trajan; and his Epistle

to the Corinthians, written in 95 or 96, contains no reference to the Gospel. But what of Ignatius? His epistles were written in the year 110 when the old man was travelling in fetters to his martyrdom at Rome. They are addressed to the churches along the route, and they are merely hasty messages of encouragement and consolation. In such circumstances express quotation was hardly possible; yet they abound in references to Holy Writ, including several distinct echoes of our Gospel. For example, in the Epistle to the Philadelphians (ii) we read: "Where the Shepherd is, there follow ye as sheep; for there are many wolves that take captive" (cf. Jo. x. 4, 12); and again (vii): "Though some would have deceived me according to the flesh, yet the Spirit is not deceived, being from God; for 'He knoweth whence He cometh and whither He goeth'" (cf. Jo. iii. 8). Of Polycarp's numerous epistles only one has survived—his short epistle to the Philippians, nearly coincident in date with the martyrdom of Ignatius. It exhibits no clear reference to our Gospel, but it contains a quotation from the first epistle of St. John (vii): "Every one that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is Antichrist" (cf. 1 Jo. iv. 2, 3). And this is tantamount to a quotation from the Gospel, since the first epistle was its "covering letter." Hence it appears that while our Gospel was unknown to Clement, it was known to Ignatius and Polycarp in the year 110. Ere it could be thus familiar to them, it must have been some time in circulation; and so the tradition is confirmed that the Apostle wrote it in view of his departure. If it was in the year 104 that he died, then since the last chapter

(xxi), though plainly from the same hand, is a corrective afterthought, the original Gospel must have appeared somewhat previously, probably about the year 100.

Such is the traditional account of the authorship of our Gospel; and, with the solitary exception of an obscure sect of heretics in the latter half of the second century who, disliking its designation of our Lord as the *Logos* or Word, denied that it was written by the Apostle and, with an irrationality justifying their punning nickname of *Alogi*—signifying at once "deniers of the *Logos*" and "Irrationals"—ascribed it to his Ephesian adversary, the Doketist Cerinthus, the traditional account was never seriously challenged until near the middle of last century. The endeavour then was to bring the date of the Gospel down as far as possible into the second century, as late as the year 170, thus discrediting its claim to be the testimony of an eye-witness and proving it nothing more than an expression of the religious ideas of the time in the form of an imaginative life of Jesus. In view of literary and historical evidence the traditional date is nowadays generally conceded; but it is still the fashion, while abandoning the late origin of the Gospel, to maintain the inference therefrom by denying its genuineness (i.e., its Johannine authorship) and its historicity. And the motive is still the same. "The assailants," says the late Bishop Lightfoot, "are of two kinds: (1) those who deny the miraculous element in Christianity—Rationalists, and (2) those who deny the distinctive character of Christian doctrine—Unitarians." A stern judgment indeed, and one which may be resented in quarters where critical doubts are harboured without deliberate or conscious

disloyalty to our Lord's divine claims ; nevertheless it is absolutely just. For the offence of the Gospel is its affirmation of the Deity and Incarnation of our Lord as the Eternal Word made flesh and its testimony to the supernatural in its story of His raising of Lazarus and His own Resurrection from the dead. It is because these tremendous declarations are deemed incredible that its claim to be the testimony of an eye-witness is disputed ; and thus there is in truth no surer criterion of a man's estimate of our Lord than his estimate of the Fourth Gospel.

At the same time there are peculiarities in the Gospel which seem at the first glance to militate against its claim, especially certain broad differences between it and its predecessors. Consider these, and see how in truth they accord with our Gospel's claims and enhance our appreciation of its historic value.

1. *Its representation of the scene of our Lord's ministry.* Here it diverges very widely from its predecessors. The latter represent His ministry as exercised almost exclusively in Galilee. It began in Judæa with His baptism, but thereafter He migrated north and never, so far as their record shows, revisited Jerusalem until He went thither to die. Our Gospel, on the other hand, represents Him as paying frequent visits to the Holy City on the occasion of the great Feasts and exercising there on each occasion an important and sometimes protracted ministry. It recounts only a single incident which happened in Galilee—the feeding of the five thousand (vi. 1-21) ; and with this exception it is occupied exclusively with His otherwise unrecorded ministries in Judæa and Jerusalem.

Does it follow that because those Judæan ministries are unrecorded by the earlier Evangelists they are unhistorical, mere fictions of a second century romance? On the contrary they are the chief of those omissions in the narratives of his predecessors which according to ancient tradition our Evangelist set himself to supply; and his representation is not merely *a priori* probable but indeed inevitable. For, in the first place, as a devout Jew our Lord must needs have gone up to the Holy City at least once every year at the season of the Passover; and could He have sojourned there without discoursing to the multitudes that, moved by the fame of His doings in Galilee, crowded round Him? And since He was the Messiah, the Promised Redeemer of Israel, He must surely have presented His claim in the sacred capital.

Nor are we left to mere *a priori* probability; for even in the earlier Gospels, the Synoptics as they are technically designated, albeit they contain no express record thereof, there are not lacking clear echoes of His Judæan ministry. For example, His answer to the Baptist's disciples regarding His neglect of fasting (Mt. ix. 15; Mk. ii. 19, 20; Lk. v. 34, 35) is a manifest allusion to their master's pronouncement as recorded by St. John (cf. iii. 29); His accusation in the court of the Sanhedrin (Mt. xxvi. 61; Mk. xv. 29) rested on a word of His which, according to St. John (cf. ii. 18-21), was spoken in Jerusalem at the beginning of His ministry; and His apostrophe to the unbelieving city "How often would I!" (Mt. xxiii. 37-39; Lk. xiii. 34, 35) is unintelligible if, preaching exclusively in Galilee, He had never previously appealed to her.

Moreover, St. Luke (x. 38-42) has preserved an actual incident of His Judæan ministry—His entertainment by Martha and Mary in their home at Bethany. And then there is the incident of His clearing of the Temple-court. It occurred, it could only have occurred, as St. John has it (ii. 13-22), at the outset of His ministry when as yet the rulers were in doubt regarding His claims. That early visit to Jerusalem is unrecorded by the Synoptics; but an incident so remarkable could not be passed over in silence, and they have inserted it in their narratives of the Passion-week (cf. Mt. xxi. 12, 13; Mk. xi. 15-17; Lk. xix. 45, 46).

2. *Its representation of His method of teaching.* Here also it differs widely from its predecessors. In the latter His teaching is simple and gracious discourse, abounding in homely and charming parables; in the fourth Gospel it is theological disquisition, controversial and polemical.

It is indeed a striking contrast, but duly considered it appears most natural and truly inevitable. A speaker necessarily adapts himself to his audience, and our Lord's audiences in Galilee and Jerusalem were very diverse. In Galilee He had to do with peasant folk—fishermen, ploughmen, vinedressers, and the like; and He taught them with appropriate simplicity, quoting their familiar proverbs and employing common things—birds, nets, lamps, flowers—as symbols of high and heavenly truths. But what of Jerusalem? It was the seat of the Temple and the home of Rabbinism. It was dominated by priests and scribes, and every citizen was versed in theological and casuistical disputation. The chief scene of His ministry there was that place of common resort, the outer court of the Temple; and

His discourses were mainly discussions with critical Pharisees and Sadducees who in the hope of putting Him to confusion were wont to ply Him with controversial questions in presence of the keenly interested bystanders. It was impossible that He should speak there after His Galilean manner.

Nor should it be overlooked that, according to the Synoptics, when occasion arose, He spoke in Galilee after the manner which, according to St. John, He employed at Jerusalem. Look, for example, at this saying of His (Mt. xi. 25-27 ; cf. Lk. x. 21, 22) : " I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes ; yea, Father, that so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things were delivered unto Me by My Father ; and none knoweth the Son save the Father, neither knoweth any the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." Here is the very manner of His teaching according to St. John (cf. vi. 46, 65, x. 15, xiii. 3) ; and if He said what is written here, wherefore should He not have spoken what is reported there ?

3. *Its representation of His phraseology and style of expression.* This characteristic is somewhat intangible, yet it is constantly apparent. Consider it thus : His phraseology is alike in all the earlier Gospels, insomuch that, hearing a sentence of His teaching as they report it, one might be at a loss in determining to which of the three it belongs ; but one would never suppose that it was taken from the fourth Gospel. Nor, conversely, if one heard a sentence from the latter, would one hesitate in recognising it as " Johannine."

And what is the natural inference? *Le style est l'homme même*; and if our Lord spoke as the Synoptics report, then it would seem to follow that He cannot have spoken after His manner in the fourth Gospel, and its portraiture is an unhistorical idealisation.

But this were a hasty inference. The truth is that, while the Johannine report of His discourse may indeed reproduce His *ipsissima verba* less precisely than the Synoptic, it is for that very reason truer and more realistic. Take by way of illustration Addison's characterisation of the work of a pains-taking but mechanical painter (*Spect.* No. 83): "His Figures were wonderfully laboured: If he drew the Portraiture of a Man, he did not omit a single Hair in his Face; if the Figure of a Ship, there was not a Rope among the Tackle that escaped him." That painter was not an artist: he was a draftsman. And the difference is that, whereas a draftsman reproduces every minute detail with meticulous accuracy, an artist looks at the *tout ensemble*, catches the spirit, and presents a lively image of his subject. And it is the artist who, despite and indeed by reason of his disregard of embarrassing details, conveys the truest impression. And precisely so with literary portraiture. "You may obtain," says Ruskin, "a more truthful idea of the nature of Greek religion and legend from the poems of Keats, and the nearly as beautiful, and, in general grasp of subject, far more powerful, recent works of Morris, than from frigid scholarship, however extensive. Not that the poet's impressions or renderings of things are wholly true, but their truth is vital, not formal. They are like sketches from life by Reynolds or Gainsborough,

which may be demonstrably inaccurate or imaginary in many traits, and indistinct in others, yet will be in the deepest sense, like, and true; while the work of historical analysis is too often weak with loss, through the very labour of its miniature touches, or useless in clumsy and vapid veracity of externals, and complacent security of having done all that is required for the portrait, when it has measured the breadth of the forehead, and the length of the nose."

And this is the distinction of the fourth Gospel—that it is the work of a literary artist. An analogy has often been drawn between the Synoptic and Johannine portraitures of our Lord and those of Socrates in Xenophon and Plato; and the comparison is just and illuminative. "Negatively," says Coleridge, "there may be more of the philosophy of Socrates in the Memorabilia of Xenophon than in Plato: that is, there is less that does not belong to Socrates; but the general spirit of, and impression left by, Plato are more Socratic." In the Memorabilia we find indeed more of mechanically accurate detail; but if we would see Socrates as he appeared in the eyes of his contemporaries and realise what manner of person he truly was, then we must turn to the noble portraiture sketched by a master hand on the pages of the immortal Dialogues. There we behold him with the eyes of one who loved him and therefore could interpret him, and we catch, if not the very words he spoke, yet something deeper and truer, more personal and more needful for us to know—his accent, his look, and the flash of his genius.

And even such is St. John's portraiture of our Lord. It is an impressionist sketch. Take a particular instance.

Whenever our Lord would arrest attention, He was wont to preface His announcement with the formula "Verily I say unto you"; and it is remarkable that, whereas in the Synoptics it is always single, in the fourth Gospel the "Verily" is always doubled—"Verily, verily I say unto you." And what is the reason? As nowadays, when emphasis is required, the fashion is to amplify or italicise, the fashion of old was to reduplicate. Thus, where it is written in our Version (Is. xxvi. 3) "Thou wilt keep him in *perfect peace*," the Hebrew original has "*peace, peace.*" And even so, when our Lord employed that Jewish formula of solemn asseveration, all that He actually said was, as the Synoptics report, "Verily I say unto you"; but what of the authority wherewith He spoke (cf. Mt. vii. 28, 29)? That was lost on the written page; and it was to express it that St. John wrote "Verily, verily."

It was said of Erskine of Linlathen that "should any one attempt to write his life, the difficulty must ever present itself to him that what he has to depict is spirit and not matter, that he has to convey light, to represent sound—an almost insuperable difficulty." Infinitely greater was the difficulty which presented itself to our Evangelist; and here lies the unapproached grandeur of his achievement. His Gospel, that most precious treasure in the Church's sacred heritage, is a portrayal of the Blessed Saviour as He dwelt here, full of grace and truth, not merely by a literary artist but by one who for three wonderful years had communed with Him daily in close companionship and cherished in reverent and affectionate remembrance His every look and tone and gesture.

EVER BLESSED GOD, WHO ART LIGHT AND IN WHOM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL, AND WHO HAST VOUCHSAFED TO A DARK WORLD THE LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THY GLORY IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST, THINE ETERNAL SON, OUR ONLY SAVIOUR, MERCIFULLY REGARD US AS WE STUDY THE SACRED RECORD OF THIS THY MARVELLOUS REVELATION. AND AS ALL OUR HUMAN WISDOM IS BUT FOOLISHNESS WITHOUT THE ILLUMINATION OF THY HOLY SPIRIT, BE PLEASED TO GRANT US HIS CONTINUAL AID THAT, BEING TAUGHT OF GOD, WE MAY ATTAIN UNTO AN EVER LARGER KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH AND BE FITTED MORE AND MORE FOR THY SERVICE HERE AND THY GLORY HEREAFTER: THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

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OUR LORD'S BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

i, ii

THE TITLE OF THE BOOK

i. 1

1 *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

INVALUABLE to a book—" a good name being," as Scott has it in his Introduction to *Rob Roy*, " very nearly of as much consequence in literature as in life "—is a felicitous title, one which aptly defines the theme and excites at the outset the reader's interest. And it is such a title that the Evangelist here prefixes to his immortal story. For the verse does not belong merely, as some suppose, to the ensuing genealogy (vers. 2–17), nor yet merely to the first chapter, as others suppose, taking " generation " in the sense of " birth." It is the title of the whole Gospel ; and its significance appears when we understand that in the original " generation " is *genesis* and remember that the first book of the Old Testament is entitled in the Greek Version, which our English Version follows, " Genesis " or more fully " The Genesis of the World." It is the book of beginnings, the story of the first creation ; and when the Evangelist gave his book that ancient name, he intimated that he was about to tell the story of another and grander creation—the New Creation wrought by One through whom and unto whom all things were created at the first, who is before all things, and in whom all things consist (cf. Col. i. 16, 17 ; Jo. i. 1–3 ; Heb. i. 2).

See how He is introduced.

1. He is styled " Jesus Christ " ; and what is the significance of this double nomenclature ? Jesus, the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua, is the name which He bore in the days of His flesh while dwelling here in mortal weakness, " a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief " ; and Christ, " the Anointed," is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah, the

Saviour promised of old. In the New Testament our Lord is called sometimes "Jesus Christ" and sometimes "Christ Jesus"; and the difference is that the former begins with His humanity and rises to His deity, while the latter begins with His deity and descends to His humanity. The latter is the order which St. John follows, introducing our Blessed Lord as the Eternal Word who in the beginning was with God and was God, and telling how He became flesh and dwelt among us. But it is the former order that is followed by St. Matthew and his fellow Synoptists, as they are designated, St. Mark and St. Luke. They introduce Him as "Jesus"; and as they depict His progress through the world, they reveal Him ever more clearly as "the Christ" until at last they show Him "risen afar at God's right hand."

2. St. Matthew was the Jewish Evangelist, and his Gospel was written just after the tragedy of the destruction of Jerusalem as a final appeal to his unbelieving compatriots, in the hope that in the day of their calamity they would recognise the Saviour whom they had despised and rejected (cf. Introduction, p. xvi). Its constant purpose is to demonstrate His Messiahship, and here He is styled not merely "Jesus the Messiah" but "the Son of David," the prophetic King of Israel who should reign in righteousness and fill the whole earth with His glory, and "the Son of Abraham," the heir of the ancient promise to "the father of the faithful" that "in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed."

OUR LORD'S GENEALOGY

i. 2–17

2 *Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;*

3 *And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;*

4 *And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;*

5 *And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;*

6 *And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;*

7 *And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;*

8 *And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;*

9 *And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;*

10 *And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;*

11 *And *Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:*

12 *And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;*

13 *And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;*

14 *And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;*

* Some read, *Josias begat Jakim, and Jakim begat Jechonias.*

15 *And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;*

16 *And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*

17 *So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.*

"EVERY Scottishman," says Sir Walter, "has a pedigree. It is a national prerogative." In the humblest peasant's cot a treasured heirloom, handed down from generation to generation, is the Family Bible with its Family Register; and it is the pride of the poorest if in the catalogue of his forebears there be one who fought at Drumclog, was shot by "bloody Claverhouse," or "justified on the Grassmarket." And in like manner every true-hearted Jew had a pedigree. Though but a tentmaker with toilworn hands, he gloried in a blameless lineage (cf. Phil. iii. 5), and it was his highest boast if he could prove himself, however remotely or precariously, a descendant of David, albeit in those days of national humiliation the glory of the royal house had long passed away. It was thus natural that a Jewish biography should be prefaced with a genealogy; but is it not surprising that the custom should be observed in our Lord's case? For it is through Joseph that His descent is here traced, and yet, as the Evangelist recognises in the very act of tracing it (cf. ver. 16) and presently sets forth at large (cf. vers. 18–23), He was no son of Joseph.

The seeming contradiction is in truth a singularly impressive testimony to the miracle of our Lord's birth. The manner of His conception was a sacred mystery, and at the first it was known only to Joseph and Mary and their close intimates. They reverently and solicitously guarded it (cf. Lk. ii. 19, 51), knowing how coarsely it would have been misconstrued had it gone abroad; and the general belief was that the Holy Child had been born of Joseph and Mary by ordinary generation. It was on this supposition that His genealogy was constructed by the first generation of Jewish believers; and, as here presented,

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it exhibits the method of an age when not only were records scanty but exactitude was little regarded. To facilitate remembrance it is artificially arranged in three divisions of fourteen generations each. The material of the first (from Abraham to David) and second (from David to the Babylonian Captivity) is derived from the First Book of Chronicles (ii. 1–15, iii. 1–16), four generations (Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jehoiakim) being omitted in the latter for the sake of symmetry, as the marginal reading partially indicates. For the third division no scriptural material was available, and it is traditional.

A genealogy thus loosely constructed, though far short of the requirement of a College of Heraldry, amply fulfilled the Jewish purpose by establishing an heritage in the nation's sacred traditions; and the Evangelist had good reason for entering it in his narrative, inconsistent though it seems with his proclamation of the mystery of our Lord's birth. For (1) though Joseph was not His father after the flesh, he acted a father's part by the Holy Child, and among the Jews an adopted son was regarded as sharing his foster father's lineage. Thus Joseph's antecedents were His, and a genealogy which made Joseph a descendant of David and Abraham accorded with the Evangelist's design of demonstrating His Messiahship. And (2) though in reckoning descent the Jews took no account of the maternal line, the Evangelist has entered in our Lord's genealogy the names of four women (cf. vers. 3, 5, 6). And what manner of women these are! Tamar, who played so foul a part with Judah (cf. Gen. xxxviii. 6–30); Rahab, the harlot of Jericho; Ruth, a heathen Moabitess; Bathsheba, the partner of David's transgression. Wherefore are these mentioned, and these alone? "It was for this that He came," said St. Chrysostom, "not to shun our reproaches but to remove them. Therefore, even as it is not for that He died that He is had in admiration, but rather for that He was crucified—a thing of reproach yet by its very reproach displaying His love for man, so of His birth may it be said: not for that He assumed flesh and became man is it right to have Him in admiration, but because He deigned to have such kinsfolk,

nowhere thinking shame of our ills." Thus the Gospel shines in the Genealogy.

Jesus! who from Thy Throne didst come,
And man's most vile estate assume,
  Our fallen race to lift,
Oh grant that such transcending love
To me through Thine own grace may prove
  No ineffectual gift.

HIS BIRTH

i. 18–25

18 *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.*

19 *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.*

20 *But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is *conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*

21 *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name †JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

22 *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,*

23 *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and ‡they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*

24 *Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:*

25 *And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.*

THE scene, as St. Luke explains (cf. i. 26, 27, ii. 4), was Nazareth in far northern Galilee, where Mary had her home and Joseph, a native of Bethlehem in Judæa, had settled and worked as a carpenter. It was grievous to him when, ignorant of the amazing truth, he discovered the condition of his betrothed; and his character is revealed by his behaviour. See how the Evangelist portrays it. "Joseph her husband" he says. He was indeed merely her betrothed as yet, but

* Gr. *begotten.* † That is, *Saviour,* Heb. ‡ Or, *his name shall be called.*

his pledge was sacred in his eyes. For he was "a just" or "righteous man"—a phrase which in those days bore two widely different meanings. It generally denoted one who adheres to the letter of the law, not only doing but exacting strict justice. In this sense Shylock was "a righteous man," and so, after a nobler fashion, was the Roman Cato. Such a man is stern and pitiless, and, while he may be respected, it is impossible to love him. Hence, says St. Paul (Rom. v. 7), one would scarcely die for "a righteous man," though for "a good man," a kindly, generous man, one might. At the same time the phrase had a better meaning. A truly "righteous man" is one who, conscious of his own undeserving, judges fairly and generously after the manner of God who sees "with larger other eyes than ours, to make allowance for us all." This is the meaning here. Being "a righteous man" or, in St. Chrysostom's paraphrase, "kindly and sweetly reasonable," Joseph would not "make her a publick example" or, as the phrase is elsewhere rendered (Col. ii. 15), "make a show of her openly," and again (Heb. vi. 6), "put her to an open shame." He could not indeed marry her, but he would, so far as might be, spare her humiliation by "putting her away privily."

A wise man is never hasty, and ere proceeding in the matter Joseph would "take counsel with his pillow." It was indeed a prudent resolution; for, says Lecky in his excellent book *The Map of Life*, "it has been noticed that often thoughts and judgments, scattered and entangled in our evening hours, seem sifted, clarified, and arranged in sleep; that problems which seemed hopelessly confused when we lay down are at once and easily solved when we awake, 'as though a reason more perfect than reason had been at work when we were in our beds.'" Sleep thus, in Shakespeare's phrase, "knits up the ravell'd sleave of care"; and who would lightly affirm that the ancients, not merely the superstitious multitude but philosophers like Aristotle and Plato, erred in holding that dreams are premonitions, "warning," as Chaucer has it, "of thinges that men after seen"? It is the testimony of Holy Scripture (cf. Job xxxiii. 14–26) that of old, when the light of revelation

was yet dim, God was wont to communicate His purposes in two special ways—by dreams and by the ministry of angels. An angel signified "a messenger"; and since even the forces of nature, the wind and the lightning (cf. Ps. civ. 4 R.V.), are designated His messengers, there are instances where "the angel of the Lord" may reasonably be recognised as a prophet or other human messenger. Generally, however, it is plainly a heavenly visitant that is meant, one of His "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. i. 14).

Joseph lay down that night with a troubled heart, and as he slept his waking thoughts shaped themselves into a dream (cf. Eccl. v. 3), and an angel intimated to him the wonderful truth of his betrothed's condition. The Child in her womb had been "begotten of the Holy Spirit" (R.V. marg.). What this means appears when we remember that the Holy Spirit is constantly represented in the Scriptures as the quickening energy of the Divine Nature alike in the physical and in the spiritual domain, alike in creation and in recreation, in generation and in regeneration. It was the *Creator Spiritus*, "brooding over it," as the Rabbinical interpreter has it, "like a dove over her nest," that turned the primal chaos into a cosmos, an ordered world (Gen. i. 2 R.V.).

> Thou from the first
> Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
> Dove-like, sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
> And madest it pregnant.

And every springtime the miracle is repeated, as it is written (Ps. civ. 30): "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the ground." And so too in the spiritual domain, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Hence, when it is written that the Holy Child was "begotten in the Virgin of the Holy Spirit," the meaning is that His humanity was a fresh creation. He was born sinless. He was the Second Adam (cf. Rom. v. 14–17; 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 45–49), the new head of

our race ; and His humanity, like the First Adam's, came fresh from the hand of God, untainted by hereditary corruption. In Him the long entail of sin was broken, and humanity made a new beginning.

O loving wisdom of our God !
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love ! that flesh and blood
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against their foe,
Should strive and should prevail.

It was ordained that the Child should bear the name of Jesus, the Greek form of Joshua—a common Jewish name, and thus associating Him with His people, yet withal proclaiming His mission since not only had it been borne by the heroic leader who had brought their fathers into the Land of Promise but it signified "the Lord is salvation."

He's God Himself, come down from Heaven to raise us when we fall ;
He's come to heal us when we're sick, to hear us when we call ;
If He hadn't come to do us good, He wouldn't have come at all.

He didn't come to judge the world, He didn't come to blame,
He didn't only come to seek, it was to save He came ;
And when we call Him Saviour, then we call Him by His name.

Here in conformity with his constant purpose of winning his Jewish countrymen to faith in the Saviour whom they had rejected, the Evangelist pauses to point out how the miracle of His birth had been foreshadowed in their sacred Scriptures. "All this," he says, "hath come to pass that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying (Is. vii. 14) : 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.'" To Jewish minds an appeal to their venerated Scriptures was unanswerable, but modern unbelief has turned the Evangelist's argument to its own ends. In the year 1835 Strauss published his *Life of Jesus* with the design of proving that the evangelic story is a tissue of legends derived from the ancient dreams of a Divine Messiah. What the Evangelists

tell is merely Messianic prophecy turned into history; and the passage before us exemplifies the method. It was a Jewish expectation that the Messiah would be born of a virgin, and, since Jesus was regarded as the Messiah, it was assumed that He was born on this wise. And thus originated a myth concerning His birth, though He was actually the offspring of an ordinary marriage between Joseph and Mary.

But what is the fact? It is not a little remarkable, surely exemplifying how God employs the very inadvertence of His servants for the discomfiture of His adversaries, that the Evangelist has here read into that ancient scripture an alien significance. He quotes the prophecy from the Septuagint, the Greek Version of the Old Testament, which at that period when Hebrew was almost a dead language, as unintelligible to ordinary Jews as the English of Chaucer to ourselves, was to the Jews very much what the Authorised Version is to us; and it is unquestionable that the Septuagint is here at fault, inasmuch as the Hebrew word rendered "virgin" signifies merely "damsel," a girl in the bloom of early womanhood. See what the original passage means. In view of the disaster wherewith Judah was menaced by the confederate invasion of Ephraim and Syria, the prophet reassures King Ahaz with a promise of speedy deliverance; and that, when it came to pass, his promise might be attested as a message from the Lord, he gives a sign: "Behold, the damsel"—probably, according to the Jewish interpretation, his own lately wedded wife (cf. viii. 3)—"is with child, and she shall bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel ('God with us')." And ere the child's birth Assyria would intervene and compel the confederates to raise the siege. Thus it was not our Lord's Virgin Birth that the prophet had in view; and in truth there is no premonition of that transcendent miracle in the Old Testament Scriptures, nor was it ever anticipated by the Jews that their Messiah would be born after that manner. Hence it appears that the evangelic story of our Lord's birth is no legend created by ancient prophecy. It is an actual history, and the Evangelist would never have seen a foreshadowing of it in that ancient prophecy unless the miracle had been before his eyes.

"THE STAR-LED WIZARDS"

ii. 1–12

1 *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,*

2 *Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

3 *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

4 *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.*

5 *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet,*

6 *And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall *rule my people Israel.*

7 *Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.*

8 *And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.*

9 *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*

10 *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*

11 *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they †presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.*

* Or, *feed.* † Or, *offered.*

12 *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.*

ST. LUKE (ii. 1–5) explains how it was that, though Nazareth in Galilee was the home of Joseph and Mary, our Lord was born at Bethlehem. Joseph had repaired thither on the occasion of the first imperial census to register himself, according to the Jewish fashion, at his ancestral town, taking Mary with him since, it would seem, he purposed remaining there to escape the vexation of her neighbours' misjudgment of her condition. Herod the Great was still on the throne; and since he died on April 1, 4 B.C., the common reckoning of our Lord's birth is manifestly erroneous, and evidence will emerge in our study of St. Luke's narrative that He was born in 5 B.C., probably in the month of August. It was now some six weeks after His birth, since Mary had already, in accordance with the Jewish law (cf. Lev. xii), presented her offering of purification (cf. Lk. ii. 22–38); and who were these "wise men" or in Milton's phrase "wizards" who appeared in Jerusalem? The word in the original is *magi*, and it signified "astrologers," practitioners of the art which professed to read in the stars the destinies of men and nations, and which persisted in the Middle Ages and down to comparatively recent times, as every reader of *Quentin Durward* and *Guy Mannering* will remember. Its home was the mystic East, whence astrologers were known also as "Chaldæans"; and it was from the East that those strangers came. Evidently from their triple offering there were three of them, and later legend made them kings (cf. Ps. lxxii. 10, 11), naming them Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. They had been two years on the way (cf. vers. 7, 16); and astronomical calculation has ascertained that the year 7 B.C. witnessed a series of planetary conjunctions recurring at intervals of some eight centuries. On its recurrence in 1604–5 Kepler observed that it was followed by the appearance of a brilliant star which shone for some eighteen months and then vanished. The phenomenon was interpreted by those wise men, according to the rules of their art, as portending the

birth of a mighty king ; and they set forth to find him and pay him homage. Where the event would befall they knew not, since the star merely presaged it without defining time or place. Far and wide they sought, encouraged by the nightly spectacle of that brilliant star blazing in the sky and ever, like the rainbow, retreating as they advanced and resting when they rested. At length they found a clue. It is recorded, among others, by the Latin historians Tacitus and Suetonius that in those dark days even the heathen were anticipating the dawn of a better era and, influenced by rumours of Israel's Messianic Hope, were looking to the Holy Land for its inauguration. " There was a persuasion in many minds that it was contained in ancient priestly writings that at that very time the East would wax strong, and they would come forth from Judæa to master the world."

Hearing of this expectation, the wise men hastened to Jerusalem. Their appearance and their question startled the city and alarmed Herod. And no wonder ; for his wicked reign was closing amid civil and domestic disaffection. The Jewish historian records that recently a prediction had been circulated that the throne would pass to the house of his brother Pheroras, and thence would spring a wonder-working king—the promised Messiah. Its authors had been put to death, but the question of those mysterious strangers revived it, and at all hazards he would avert the menace to his dynasty. He convened the supreme court of the Sanhedrin and learned from the Scribes, the official interpreters of the Sacred Law, that the Messiah's prophetic birthplace was the village of Bethlehem, some five miles south of the capital. His obvious course was to despatch thither his *speculatores,* the ruffians whom, after the manner of an ancient tyrant, he had in his employment ; but their appearance in the village and their inquiries would have raised an alarm, and lest his victim should escape he proceeded craftily. Professing a desire to go himself and pay homage to the new-born King, he bade the wise men report where they found Him.

Evidently they suspected his malign intention ; for it is written that " they listened to the king and went their way."

It was now late in the day, and already the star which had so long lured them on their quest was sparkling in the sky. It "led them on," says the Evangelist, telling the story in popular phrase as it seemed to the wayfarers, "until it came and stopped overhead where the Child was." What they learned in converse with Joseph confirmed their distrust of the tyrant, and a dream determined their course. Instead of returning to Jerusalem they "departed," or rather, as in vers. 14, 22, "retreated" directly homeward. It was a flight, yet it was a triumph; for they carried home richer treasures than they had brought. They had found more, far more, than they sought. They had sought a King and they found the Saviour.

> Oh glory be to God on high for these Arabian kings,
> These miracles of royal faith, with eastern offerings:
> For Gaspar and for Melchior and Balthazzar, who from far
> Found Mary out and Jesus by the shining of a star!

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT

ii. 13–15

13 *And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.*

14 *When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:*

15 *And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.*

HIS converse with the wise men and their hurried departure next morning alarmed Joseph, and the following night he too was divinely warned. Starting from his couch, he conveyed Mary and her sacred charge away under cover of darkness. It was natural that he should betake himself to Egypt, since in no heathen country at that period were Jewish settlers more numerous. It was reckoned that there were no fewer than a million Jews in Egypt; and of the five districts of the capital Alexandria two were known as "the Jewish districts" because their population was mainly Jewish; and besides there was a sprinkling of Jews in the other three districts. Thus the exiles would find themselves among friends, and Joseph would easily earn a livelihood.

Here again, with his accustomed formula ("that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet"), the Evangelist points out to his Jewish readers a prophetic foreshadowing of the event (cf. Hos. xi. 1), proving our Lord the Promised Saviour. To our modern minds his quotation seems inept, since the prophetic reference is not to the Infant Messiah's exile but to the historic deliverance of Israel, God's

son, even His firstborn (cf. Ex. iv. 22, 23), from the land of bondage. To Jewish minds, however, the argument was valid, since they justly recognised that, even as of old " all roads led to Rome," so all Israel's history had a forward look and, as St. Augustine put it, her whole administration was a prophecy of the King who should come and build a Heavenly Commonwealth of all nations. Thus on every page of their ancient Scriptures they saw a foreshadowing of the Christ.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

ii. 16–18

16 *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.*

17 *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,*

18 *In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*

TO make sure work the tyrant's emissaries made no inquiries but fell upon the unsuspecting village and butchered all "the male children" (R.V.) under two years of age, thus ensuring, as they deemed, the destruction of the Holy Child, since it was two years since the appearance of the star heralding His birth. The victims would indeed be few in number, since Bethlehem was a mere village; yet even so it was a fiendish atrocity, and it sent a shudder through the land. The remembrance was still poignant in the neighbourhood when the Evangelist wrote the story, and he depicts the anguish with exquisite felicity by that prophetic quotation (Jer. xxxi. 15). Ramah was the village, four to five miles north of the capital, where Jacob buried Rachel by the wayside (cf. Gen. xxxv. 16–20). Amid the sufferings of his people in the days of the Assyrian conquest it had seemed to the prophet as though their mother were weeping in her grave, and now the Evangelist hears again the voice of her lamentation for her children.

SETTLEMENT AT NAZARETH

ii. 19–23

19 *But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,*

20 *Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.*

21 *And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.*

22 *But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judæa in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:*

23 *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

TRADITION, not without probability, has it that the Holy Family's sojourn in Egypt lasted a year. If our Lord was born in the month of August, 5 B.C., the flight from Bethlehem some six weeks later was in the month of October. It was on April 1, 4 B.C., that Herod died, but it would be long ere the news reached Joseph's ears and longer still ere he could settle his affairs; and thus it may well have been October ere he set forth on the homeward journey. His intention was to return to Bethlehem and reoccupy his deserted home; but on approaching the frontier of Judæa he heard disquieting tidings. Archelaus was maintaining his father's evil tradition. It is recorded, for example, that during the Passover-season in the very month of his accession, when Jerusalem was crowded with worshippers clamorous for needful reforms, he let his soldiers loose upon them while they were

offering their sacrifices, and some three thousand were slain. There was thus no security at Bethlehem for the Holy Family, and Joseph's perplexity was again resolved by a dream bidding him repair to Nazareth, his former dwelling-place. There they would be safe, since Nazareth was in Galilee and by Herod's will Galilee had been assigned to Antipas, the half-brother of Archelaus.

Nazareth was a town of evil reputation (cf. Jo. i. 46), and His connection with it prejudiced our Lord's Messianic claim in Jewish eyes, all the more that it was written that the Messiah would be born at Bethlehem (cf. ii. 5, 6 ; Jo. vii. 42). And so the Evangelist, ever solicitous to persuade his Jewish compatriots of our Lord's Messiahship, appeals to the testimony of prophetic scripture. Observe the precise terms of his reference. His words truly rendered are : " He came and settled in a city named Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets that He would be called ' a Nazarene.' " It is a much debated difficulty that there is no such prophecy in the Old Testament, and three explanations have been proposed. (1) St. Chrysostom thought that the Evangelist quoted from a prophetic scripture which was afterwards lost through Jewish negligence or impiety (cf. 2 Ki. xxii. 8) ; but it rules out this idea that Nazareth is nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, being a town of later origin. (2) Others, in view of the Evangelist's vague reference to " the prophets," think that he was merely quoting the general sense of ancient prophecy. " Nazarene " was a term of contempt, and it was written of the Messiah that He would be " despised and rejected of men " (Is. liii. 3). (3) More fitting is the explanation which St. Jerome, writing in his monastery at Bethlehem in 410 A.D., says was the view of Hebrew scholars in his day. It is written in the Book of Isaiah (xi. 1 R.V.) : " There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch (*netser*) out of his roots shall bear fruit." It is a prophecy of the Messiah, and in view of the consonance of *netser* (" branch ") and *natsri* (" Nazarene ") the Evangelist finds here a prophecy that the Messiah would be a Nazarene. It is indeed to our minds a mere quibble of words, but such was the manner of the Rabbinical

exegesis, so familiar and congenial to the Jewish Evangelist and his Jewish readers. To the Jews it was a sore offence, needing to be thus laboriously justified, but for those who know Him as the Friend of sinners it is most fitting that the Lord of Glory should have had His earthly home at wicked Nazareth in despised Galilee.

Fair as a beauteous tender flower
  Amidst the desert grows,
So slighted by a rebel race
  The heav'nly Saviour rose.

OUR LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY

I. HIS CALL

iii–iv. 11

OUR LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY

I
HIS CALL
iii–iv. 11

PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
iii. 1–12

1 *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa,*

2 *And saying, Repent ye : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

3 *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

4 *And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins ; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*

5 *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan,*

6 *And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*

7 *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ?*

8 *Bring forth therefore fruits meet *for repentance :*

9 *And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*

10 *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees : therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

11 *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance : but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire :*

* Or, *answerable to amendment of life.*

12 *Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

ON the lips of a Jewish narrator "in those days" was a vague phrase (cf. Gen. vi. 4; Jud. xvii. 6; 1 Sam. iii. 1; 2 Ki. xx. 1); and here the Evangelist leaps over a space of nine and twenty years. Of what befell during that long interval—the years of our Lord's childhood, youth, and early manhood—there is no record save the story which St. Luke has so happily preserved (cf. ii. 41–51) of His first attendance on the Feast of the Passover at the age of twelve and the incidental intimation that thereafter He followed Joseph's trade of carpentry (cf. Mt. xiii. 55; Mk. vi. 3). For the stories which the Apocryphal Gospels tell of His childhood are foolish fables, mostly invented to lend colour to mischievous heresies. It is indeed natural that we should regret the silence of the sacred history; but surely there is in it a gracious significance which it were well for us to lay to heart. Does it not preach encouragement and godly contentment to aspiring souls when "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" by unpropitious circumstances? Said an early friend of Sir Walter, recalling in long-after years those seemingly wasted days which the crippled lad spent in rambling among peasant folk on the romantic Borderland: "He was *makin' himsel'* a' the time, but he didna ken maybe what he was about till years had passed." And even so, with reverence be it said, there was a precious use in those years of obscurity which our Blessed Lord passed at Nazareth. For His lowly toil, lovingly and faithfully performed, was a holy discipline. He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered," accepting His humble lot as His Father's will and waiting His Father's time, and thus all the while doing the work which had been given Him to do.

Very dear the Cross of shame,
Where He took the sinner's blame,
And the tomb wherein the Saviour lay,
Until the third day came;

Yet He bore the self-same load,
And He went the same high road,
When the carpenter of Nazareth
Made common things for God.

And now the Father's time had come. At Bethabara (cf. Jo. i. 28), the southern ford of the Jordan, a preacher named John had appeared and was proclaiming a startling message. St. Luke, the Gentile Evangelist, has related his antecedents (cf. i. 5–25, 57–80), but St. Matthew had no need to introduce him to his Jewish readers, since his memory was still fresh among them. What was the secret of his mighty influence? (1) He was more than a preacher. He was a prophet, proclaiming with unfaltering assurance the word which the Lord had spoken to him. For centuries no prophetic voice had been heard in the land (cf. Ps. lxxiv. 9), and it is no wonder that in those barren days the souls of men were stirred when once more as of old the Spirit of the Lord blew upon them like the breath of spring. (2) His message was peculiarly appealing. It is remarkable that all down the history of Israel the hope of the Coming Saviour never burned so brightly as in dark days; and in that period of national humiliation a spirit of expectancy was abroad. Devout souls were "looking for the consolation of Israel" and ardent patriots were anticipating "the restoration of her kingdom"; and thus John's message, "The Kingdom of Heaven"—the reign of the Messiah—"is at hand," chiming with the universal expectation, won instant and eager attention. (3) His very aspect was arresting. Ere his call he had been, like Amos of old (cf. Am. i. 1, vii. 14, 15), a herdman and husbandman in the wilderness of Judæa. It was there that the word of the Lord came to him (cf. Lk. iii. 2), and he emerged from his seclusion in his rude guise. He wore a cloak of camel's hair, whether an undressed skin (cf. Heb. xi. 37) or cloth woven of the coarse wool, and for a girdle binding it about his waist not a gay sash or a studded belt but a leathern strap. His food was "locusts and wild honey." It is a question what precisely these may have been. The former may have been the insects so named which, dried and dressed, were relished by the poorer sort of folk (cf. Lev. xi. 22 R.V.); but they may

also have been the pods of the carob or locust-tree. And as for the "wild honey" it may have been "olive-honey," the sweet and palatable resin which exudes from the olive-branches in Syria and was popularly known of old as "manna"; but more likely it was the wild bees' honey, so plentiful in the woodlands of Palestine and so refreshing and nutritious, as Jonathan proved on a memorable occasion (cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 25–27). In any case the prophet's fare was the natural product of the wilderness; and the Evangelist's reason for enlarging thus on his outward guise was to show how strikingly reminiscent he was of Elijah, that stern prophet of old (cf. 1 Ki. xvii. 2–7; 2 Ki. i. 8)—an impressive coincidence, since there was a belief in those days that on the eve of the Messiah's advent Elijah would reappear as His herald (cf. Mal. iv. 5).

It is thus no marvel that his appearance created a mighty stir. The scene of his preaching was fitly chosen, since Bethabara was the ford of the Jordan and much frequented by travellers betwixt Galilee and Jerusalem by the eastern route through Peræa. They would carry the tidings abroad, and an eager multitude quickly gathered from Jerusalem some twenty miles distant, from the whole province of Judæa, and then from the country northward on either side of the Jordan. His proclamation of the immediate advent of the Messiah, chiming as it did with the universal expectation, was believed, and their souls were moved by his admonition. Were they ready for the Saviour's appearing? It would be a day of stern judgment on Israel's iniquities (cf. Mal. iii. 3, iv. 1); for He would come, said the prophet in the imagery of his old life of husbandry, axe and winnowing-fan in hand. "Repent ye," he cried; "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It was the old prophetic appeal (Am. iv. 12): "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." It stirred his hearers' hearts; and, when they confessed their sins, he administered to them a rite in token of their absolution, baptising them in the stream of the Jordan. It was no novel invention. It was an enlargement of the Jewish ordinance of "the Baptism of Proselytes," the bath of purification administered to heathen converts; and it signified that even as the heathen needed cleansing ere they could enter the

commonwealth of Israel, so did sinners, Jews though they were, that they might enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

It was inevitable that a movement so extensive and involving such issues should engage the attention of the Jewish authorities, and presently there appeared at Bethabara a commission representing the rival parties of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. John knew their errand, and he greeted them after the manner of his prototype Elijah with a stern and fearless denunciation. "Brood of vipers!" he cried. "Who warned you to flee from the impending wrath?" It was, like so much of the prophet's imagery, a reminiscence of his life in the wilderness, where, says Sir G. A. Smith, "throughout the summer prairie and forest fires are not uncommon. The grass and thistle of the desert will blaze for miles, driving the scorpions and vipers from their holes; and sometimes, as the prophets tell us (cf. Is. v. 24, ix. 18; Joel i. 19, 20, ii. 3), the air is filled with the smoke of a whole wood." Then, charging them to repent, he assailed the vain confidence which lulled the Jews in those days into a fatal security and which our Lord and St. Paul afterwards exposed (cf. Jo. viii. 33–39; Gal. iii; Rom. ix). They were descendants of Abraham, and they argued that, since God had made a covenant with Abraham and his seed after him (cf. Gen. xvii. 17), His favour was their inalienable heritage. See how the prophet deals with this fond hope. It was at the ford of Bethabara that the Israelites of old had crossed over into the Promised Land; and St. Jerome tells us that in his day there still stood by the river twelve stones reputed the same which at Joshua's command had been taken from its bed and set as a memorial "in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the Ark of the Covenant stood" (cf. Josh. iv. 1–9). "Though ye perish in your sin," cries the prophet, "the promise will not fail. Of these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham." God's purposes are invincible. We are but His instruments, and though we fail Him, they will not fail. He will find other instruments for their accomplishment, and we shall miss the benediction. For, says Silas Marner, "when a man turns a blessing from his door, it falls to them as take it in."

OUR LORD'S BAPTISM

iii. 13–17

13 *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.*

14 *But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?*

15 *And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.*

16 *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*

17 *And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

TWO questions arise here. (1) Wherefore did John demur when Jesus presented Himself for baptism? It was not that he knew Him and immediately recognised Him as the Messiah. There was indeed a relationship between them, since John's mother Elisabeth was a kinswoman of Mary (cf. Lk. i. 36 R.V.); but, says Jeremy Taylor, "the Baptist had never seen His face, because they had been from their infancy driven to several places, designed to several employments, and never met till now." And now they met as strangers (cf. Jo. i. 33). Plainly the reason is that John's baptism was "a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" (cf. Mk. i. 4), and when the Holy One presented Himself, there was no repentance in His heart, no confession on His lips. At the moment the Baptist would deem Him unworthy, but in converse with Him he recognised, as all did who ever had dealings with Him in the days of His flesh, the heavenly grace which shone in His blessed face and breathed from His holy lips; and he

bowed before Him, confessing his own unworthiness. (2) Wherefore should our Lord have desired to participate in a rite which had no fitness for Him, gently persisting "Suffer it to be so now" or rather "Let Me have My way for the present"? It was impossible for John to understand His reason at the moment, but He indicated it when He added "Thus it *becometh* us." So it is written again in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 10; cf. vii. 26): "It *became* Him, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings"; and here is the key to His meaning. Even as it became the Messiah to suffer and die for sinners, so it became Him to share their baptism. Though He knew no sin, He was made sin for us (2 Cor. v. 21), and He would be "numbered with the transgressors" that He might "bear their iniquities" (cf. Is. liii. 11, 12). The Baptist's rite signified confession, and of this the Sinless One had no need; but it signified also consecration, and His participation in it was His consecration to His ministry of vicarious sacrifice.

And presently all this was made plain. In St. Bernard's beautiful life of St. Malachy of Armagh it is told how once as the saint ministered at the altar a flood of light streamed through an open window and a dove flew in and after fluttering round the church rested on the crucifix before him. It was hailed as a visitation of the Heavenly Dove; and was it not a like thing that happened at Bethabara? It would be eventide when John administered his sacrament to the penitents whom his day's preaching had won; and as our Lord stood bowing in prayer (cf. Lk. iii. 21) on the river's brink, the golden light of the setting sun broke through the gathering shadows and lit the glancing plumage of a dove that was hovering above Him (cf. Ps. lxviii. 13). It meant nothing to the multitude, but to the prophet it was a revelation. The dove was an emblem of the Divine Spirit; and was it not written of the Messiah (cf. Is. xi. 2, lxi. 1) that "the Spirit of the Lord would rest upon Him"? No sooner had the thought flashed through his mind than it was confirmed by a heavenly annunciation: "This is My beloved Son." It was truly the voice of God, yet it was

unheard by the multitude. For things eternal are hidden from carnal sense.

> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

That we may hear it the curtain of sense must be drawn aside; and therefore, since they lacked this miracle, the heavenly voice, heard by John and Jesus, was unheard by the multitude. It was a declaration of our Lord's Messiahship, since "the Son of God" was a Jewish title of the Messiah. Originally a designation of the nation of Israel (cf. Ex. iv. 22; Hos. xi. 1), it afterwards denoted the king as its head and representative (cf. Pss. ii. 6, 7, lxxxix. 27) and then the Messiah, the King of Israel *par excellence*. And the voice was for John a confirmation of his thought that the Holy Stranger was none other than the Saviour whose near advent he had been proclaiming; and for our Lord it was an intimation that the long-expected hour had come and a call to address Himself forthwith to His appointed task.

Infinitely momentous and ineffably solemn is the scene which the Evangelist displays in those brief sentences. "This," says Jeremy Taylor, "was the greatest meeting that ever was upon earth, where the whole cabinet of the mysterious Trinity was opened and shewn, as much as the capacities of our present imperfections will permit."

HIS TEMPTATION

iv. 1–11

1 *Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*

2 *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.*

3 *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

4 *But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

5 *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.*

6 *And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

7 *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

8 *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;*

9 *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

10 *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

11 *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

THROUGHOUT the long years of His obscurity at Nazareth our Lord had been anticipating the day when He would be summoned to appear as the Promised Saviour. But an anticipated ordeal is still an ordeal, presenting, when it is confronted, unforeseen perplexities and demanding continual dependence on God and submission to His will. In the days of His flesh our Lord shared our human limitations and like ourselves "walked by faith and not by sight"; and now that He was summoned to enter upon the work which had been given Him to do, questions presented themselves regarding the methods which He should pursue. These had been raised in His mind by the spectacle of that eager assemblage at Bethabara and by the Baptist's exposition of his Messianic ideals and expectations; and ever solicitous to know His Father's will He craved a season of retirement that He might take counsel with His own heart and with God. There was no privacy at Bethabara, but westward beyond the Plain of Jericho towered the uplands of Judæa, and amid that desolate tumble of crags and ravines, peopled only by the creatures of the wild (cf. Mk. i. 13), He would find the solitude which He desired.

Thither He betook Himself, and for forty days He pondered the problems which presented themselves until He had solved them and saw clearly the path He should pursue. The occasion of His perplexity appears when it is understood that there prevailed among the Jewish people at that period certain expectations, generally very crude, regarding the Messiah and His work, and the problem was what attitude He should assume toward these. It was an urgent and practical question, inasmuch as His task was to win the faith of His people, and unless He fulfilled their expectation, how could they recognise Him as indeed their promised Saviour? By running counter to their ideals He would discredit His claim in their eyes and not only alienate their minds but incur their enmity as an impostor. And thus He was confronted by that "temptation of the Devil," that suggestion of carnal policy—that alike for His own ease and for the attainment of His high end He should compromise His ideal and accommodate Himself to the prevailing expectation.

According to St. Matthew and St. Luke, there were three temptations, and it is noteworthy that they recount them in different orders (cf. Lk. iv. 1–13). They both begin with the temptation to turn a stone into bread, at the same time expressly indicating that it happened last at the close of the forty days; and then they put the other two temptations in reverse order. Probably St. Matthew's idea was to present the temptations in the order of human experience—physical appetite appealing to childhood, adventure to youth, and ambition to manhood; while St. Luke considers the prizes at stake—the winning of wealth being a stronger allurement than the satisfaction of a temporary need and the winning of applause stronger still.

1. Throughout the forty days He "fasted," subsisting on berries and such poor fare as the wilderness afforded. St. Luke has no other meaning when he says that "in those days He did eat nothing"; for is it not written of John the Baptist, whose meat was locusts and wild honey, that he "came neither eating nor drinking" (Mt. xi. 10; cf. Lk. vii. 33)? While the ordeal continued, He was oblivious of all else (cf. Jo. iv. 31–34), but when it was over, His physical need asserted itself. And then the Tempter found a fresh opportunity. It would be an abuse of scriptural language to find here a personal and visible apparition of the Evil One. An open solicitation of the Enemy of our souls would be no temptation, since it would affright us. "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird"; and therefore it is written (2 Cor. xi. 14 R.V.) that when he makes his overtures, "Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light." Sometimes they are the counsels of a friend, all the more perilous when he is loved and trusted (cf. Mt. xvi. 22, 23); but generally they are the promptings of circumstances. So it was with our Lord here. It was a Jewish expectation that the Messiah would be a wonder-worker (cf. Jo. ii. 23, vii. 31), emulating Moses when he brought water from the rock and fed the people with manna in the wilderness; and now after His long abstinence it occurred to our Lord that He should convert into bread one of the lumps of limestone which littered the mountainside, thus approving Himself the Son of God, that

is, the Messiah. He dismissed the suggestion with a quotation from the Book of Deuteronomy (viii. 3), and His thought appears when we observe the context of that ancient scripture. Moses was recalling to the Israelites how the Lord their God had dealt with them in the wilderness. He had " suffered them to hunger and fed them with manna," that they might learn their dependence on Him and securely trust Him for the supply of their daily need. Our Lord had learned this lesson, and He practised it all the days of His earthly life. Is it not very significant that of all the miracles which He wrought in the course of His ministry, not one was wrought on His own behalf ? They were all works of compassion, revealing to men the Heavenly Father's mercy and emboldening them to trust His unseen providence. For His own need He had no concern. He left it in His Father's hands, and as He had come to share our human weakness, He would not by the exercise of His miraculous power exempt Himself from the privation and suffering of our common lot.

O Lord ! that I could waste my life for others,
With no ends of my own ;
That I could pour myself into my brothers,
And live for them alone !

Such was the life Thou livedst ; self abjuring,
Thine own pains never easing,
Our burdens bearing, our just doom enduring,
A life without self-pleasing !

And, furthermore, the conversion of a stone into bread would not have been a miracle. It would have been magic, like the fabled versatility of Proteus when to escape capture he transformed himself into fire, a frightful beast, and a flowing stream, or the mediæval wizardry which transmuted the miser's glittering hoard into slate-stones. Miracle is not magic ; and the difference was observed by St. Augustine when he pointed out that our Lord's wonderful works were never violations of the natural order but creative accelerations of its accustomed processes. When He turned water into wine at the wedding-feast

(cf. Jo. ii. 1–11), He effected in a moment by the power of God what is wrought continually when the dew and rain are transformed by nature's alchemy into the juice of the ripe grape-clusters. Thus in dismissing that suggestion He rejected all the charlatanry of ancient superstition and repudiated the Jewish expectation of a wonder-working Messiah.

2. How largely that expectation bulked in the minds of His contemporaries appears from this—that every pretender to Messiahship at that period professed the rôle of a wonder-worker. Thus, one Theudas arose in Peræa during the reign of Claudius and assured the multitude that like Joshua of old he would divide the Jordan and they would pass over on dry ground and march in triumph to Jerusalem; and another, an Egyptian Jew (cf. Ac. xxi. 38), in the days of the Procurator Felix promised that if they followed him to Mount Olivet, they would see the walls of the city fall at his command like Jericho's at the blast of Joshua's trumpets. Picture our Lord's situation. It was near the season of Passover when Jerusalem would be thronged with worshippers from near and far; and as He surveyed the Holy City from those wild uplands, He bethought Himself how powerfully it would appeal to their imagination, compelling their faith in His Messiahship, should He take His stand on "the Pinnacle of the Temple," the eastern rampart overhanging the dizzy depth of the Kidron Valley, and thence precipitate Himself into the crowded court, trusting that angel hands would bear Him scatheless to the ground according to the ancient promise (cf. Ps. xci. 11, 12).

The idea, so congenial to the spirit of His generation, presented itself to His mind, but it found no lodging there. He dismissed it as, in the language of Scripture (cf. Dt. vi. 16), "a tempting of God." "Tempting of God," wrote Oliver Cromwell to Colonel Robert Hammond on 25th November, 1648, "ordinarily is either by acting presumptuously in carnal confidence, or in unbelief through diffidence: both these ways Israel tempted God in the wilderness, and He was grieved by them." It is faith's privilege to confront stedfastly and fearlessly whatever

perils God may appoint, sure of His gracious succour; but we tempt Him when we foolhardily involve ourselves in needless ordeals, flattering ourselves that He will bring us through, or fail in duty, expecting that He will interpose to repair our negligence. "Not the encountering of difficulties, therefore, makes us to tempt God; but the acting before and without faith." Neither will God be with us when, in Knox's phrase, we "rin quhair He hath not callit us," nor will He save us by a miracle from the consequences of our cowardice or unbelief; and to expect either is tempting Him—putting Him unwarrantably to the test.

3. Another Jewish expectation in those days was that the Messiah, the King of Israel, "great David's greater Son," would be a national deliverer, achieving the triumph which Judas Maccabæus had so gallantly essayed. Hence it is that Messianic movements in those days were invariably insurrections against imperial Rome, desperate attempts at armed rebellion by indignant and fanatical patriots. This Messianic ideal also presented itself to our Lord's mind. In the course of His meditative wanderings through the wilderness He found Himself on the summit of "an exceeding high mountain," perhaps that bare and barren ridge overlooking the fertile Plain of Jericho whereof Josephus speaks; and thence He beheld the lines of highway running north and south, the mountains of Gilead eastward melting into the wide desert, that trackless pathway to the kingdoms of the Euphrates and the Tigris, and westward the tumble of hills descending to the Plain of Sharon and the blue Mediterranean with the Levantine seaports, those gateways to Greece and Rome and Spain. Far beyond the range of sight imagination conjured up a view of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—that world which He had come to win.

And how should He win it? That Jewish dream of universal dominion presented itself to His mind—a wild dream indeed for any other but surely practicable for One who had the hosts of Heaven at His command (cf. Mt. xxvi. 53). Rome was then mistress of the world, and the nations were chafing under the baleful tyranny of Tiberius, now an obscene recluse. Would

not the usurpation of the imperial throne be an easy achievement? Such is the argument which Milton puts on the Tempter's lips:

> With what ease,
> Endued with regal virtues, as thou art,
> Appearing, and beginning noble deeds,
> Mightst thou expel this monster from his throne,
> Now made a sty, and, in his place ascending,
> A victor people free from servile yoke!

Reasonable and alluring as it seemed to His Jewish contemporaries with their expectation of a national deliverer, "a King to slay their foes and lift them high," the suggestion was abhorrent to our Lord. It pointed to the path of violence, and, said a saint of early days, "violence belongeth not to God." It is the Devil's way, and to pursue it is to worship him (cf. Dt. vi. 13). God's way is ever the path of love and sacrifice; and that path His Messiah must tread. A kingdom built by violence is not the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now when He has "fought His doubts and gather'd strength," the angels whom He would not wrongfully summon to His aid, come unbidden and minister unto Him. And what is the lesson of His experience? (1) When tempted, even in a wilderness, we are never alone or unbefriended. We are compassed by unseen yet gracious and loving presences, pitying our weakness, sorrowing for our defeats, and rejoicing in our triumphs (cf. Heb. xii. 1);

> And Power is with us in the night,
> Which makes the darkness and the light,
> And dwells not in the light alone

(2) The conflict may be stubborn and often renewed, but we are strengthened by resistance, and each decision is a step toward victory. Thrice was our Lord assailed, and then "the Devil left Him," since he had, says St. Luke (iv. 13), "ended all the temptation" or rather "exhausted every sort of temptation." He had tried every device; he had shot his last bolt. (3) The Devil left Him, but only, says St. Luke, "for a season" or "until further opportunity." It is written (cf. Job vii. 1,

xiv. 14) that man's days upon earth are "a warfare"—"a field of battle," Mazzini has it, "upon which all who in their hearts love justice, beauty, and holiness, are bound to play their part"; and each victory is but a breathing-space, gladdened by angel visitants—faith, courage, and hope. It will appear in the sequel how all through His earthly ministry those very temptations in divers forms continually assailed our Lord afresh; but the issue was never in doubt. It was determined once for all by this initial conflict.

OUR LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY

II. HIS GALILEAN MINISTRY

iv. 12–xviii

II

HIS GALILEAN MINISTRY

iv. 12–xviii

HIS SETTLEMENT AT CAPERNAUM

iv. 12–16

12 *Now when Jesus had heard that John was *cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;*

13 *And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:*

14 *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,*

15 *The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;*

16 *The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.*

HERE the narrative leaps forward some two months, and St. John (cf. i. 29–iv) tells how the interval was occupied. After the Temptation He betook Himself to the wedding-feast at Cana, returning thence for the celebration of the Passover which fell that year (26 A.D.) on March 21. Meanwhile, to escape the molestation of the rulers, the Baptist had retreated northward to Ænon; and after the Passover our Lord repaired to Bethabara and engaged there in an active ministry. On hearing of the Baptist's arrest He quitted Bethabara and after an eventful passage through Samaria began His Galilean ministry.

He did not return to His old abode at Nazareth. Recognising

* Or, *delivered up.*

the justice of the proverb that " a prophet has no honour among his own people," especially so rude a people as the Nazarenes, He had fixed upon the town of Capernaum as the headquarters of His northern ministry. It was a happy choice, since Capernaum was the principal town of the province, presenting an effective opportunity. It is indeed surprising that the precise position of a town so important in its day and so hallowed by sacred memories should be now uncertain. It lay on the north-west of the Lake, but whether its site be *Tell Hum* some two miles and a half from the debouchure of the Upper Jordan or *Khan Minyeh* some two miles farther along is undetermined, though the latter seems the more likely. The town proper was situated a little distance inland, but it was connected with the Lake by its fisher-quarter Bethsaida or " Fisherton," designated " Bethsaida of Galilee " (cf. Jo. xii. 21) to distinguish it from Bethsaida Julias in Gaulanitis on the eastern side of the Upper Jordan. The source of its prosperity was threefold : (1) The Lake, known of old from its configuration as Chinnereth or " The Harp " (cf. Num. xxxiv. 11 ; Josh. xiii. 27), abounded in fish of an excellent quality ; and its fishery was a thriving industry. Toward its southern end stood the town of Taricheæ or " Pickleries " where the fish were preserved for exportation far and wide. (2) Capernaum adjoined the Plain of Gennesaret, " Gardens of Princes," and the rich harvests of that beautiful and fertile champaign supplied its markets. And (3) it stood on " the Way of the Sea," the busy route betwixt Damascus and the ports of the Levant ; and, being the frontier-station of Galilee, it had a large traffic in the collection of customs (cf. ix. 9), and it was moreover occupied by a military garrison (cf. viii. 5).

The northern province was despised by its neighbours of Judæa, and the reason is enshrined in its name. This signified in Hebrew a " circle " or " ring " ; and the country was called " Galilee " or in full " Galilee of the Gentiles " because it was encircled by heathen nations. Frequently in the course of its history it had been overrun, and there were Gentile elements in its population. Nowhere indeed was the spirit of patriotism stronger in our Lord's day ; nevertheless the Galileans were

despised by the Judæans in the pride of their unblemished lineage, their learning, and their possession of the Holy City and the Temple. It was thus a stumbling-block to the recognition of our Lord's Messiahship by the Jews that Galilee was the scene of His ministry (cf. Jo. vii. 41, 42, 52); and therefore the Evangelist is careful to remind his Jewish readers that it had been so written of old (cf. Is. ix. 1, 2). And now, forasmuch as it was "environed with His blessed feet," that once despised land is earth's hallowed shrine.

How pleasant to me thy deep-blue wave,
O Sea of Galilee!
For the glorious One who came to save,
Hath often stood by thee.

O Saviour! gone to God's right hand,
Yet the same Saviour still,
Graved on Thy heart is this lovely strand,
And every fragrant hill.

CALL OF FOUR APOSTLES

iv. 17–22

17 *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

18 *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.*

19 *And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

20 *And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.*

21 *And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.*

22 *And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.*

IS it not surprising that our Lord should thus take up the message of the Baptist (cf. iii. 2): "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"? He was the Messiah, the King of Israel; and surely, now that the King was present, the Kingdom was present too. Nay, for the Kingdom of Heaven comes only where it is welcomed; and therefore it is that He has taught His disciples in all ages to pray (cf. vi. 10) "Thy Kingdom come" and to labour for its coming. And its coming is ever proportionate to its welcome; for, says George MacDonald, "the Kingdom of Heaven is not come, even when God's will is our law: it is come when God's will is our will. While God's will is our law, we are but a kind of noble slaves; when His will is our will, we are free children."

Preaching was not His sole business. He had come on a mighty errand—the winning of the world for God; and His appointed time was short. He knew from the first that He

would only begin the work, and His purpose was to surround Himself as soon as He might with a band of disciples not merely to aid Him while He remained with them but to be instructed in "the mysteries of His Kingdom" (xiii. 11) and thus fitted for continuing the work after His departure. From the very outset He was continually on the watch for suitable men, and as He found them, He marked them for His own and in due course called them to forsake their homes and their worldly employments and cast in their lot with Him. Here is the story of the calling of four. It seems strangely, almost incredibly sudden; but St. John (cf. i. 35–42) shows that they were no strangers to Him. Already some three months ago He had met them at Bethabara and won their hearts; and now He invites them to the great surrender.

It was morning, and the fishermen of Bethsaida had come ashore from the night's fishing. As He walked by the lakeside, Jesus observed two of the disciples whom He had won at Bethabara—Simon, whom He had styled Peter or in Aramaic Cephas, "the Rock" (cf. Jo. i. 42), and his brother Andrew. According to our Version they were "casting a net into the sea." The word for "net" here is literally "a cast-about" —a circular net which, deftly thrown, spread out and in sinking enclosed its prey; and it is surprising that they should have been thus employed, since night was the time for fishing and it was now broad day when the fish would have sought the dark, cool depths. The fact is that both here and in the parallel passage of St. Mark (cf. i. 17) the original text is uncertain through the blundering of copyists; and an examination of manuscript evidence shows that the true reading is "tossing their nets in the sea." As St. Luke has it, "they were washing their nets." They were "tossing them in the sea" to rinse them clear of mud and weeds in readiness for the next night's fishing. Jesus accosted them. "Follow Me" He said—"come after Me; and I will make you fishers of men."

It was indeed a gracious invitation. Surely in His converse with them during those three months He had been preparing them for so momentous an issue; and as He showed them His high mission and His expectation of their co-operation,

they would wonder what they could do, humble fishermen as they were, with no skill save in handling boats and nets. And now He links their divine vocation with their earthly calling. Fishers aforetime, they would be fishers still—fishers of men; and the qualities which their humble craft faithfully practised had wrought in them—courage, endurance, patience, and subtlety—would prove a precious equipment for their sacred ministry. "He found," says old Isaak Walton, "that the hearts of such men, by nature, were fitted for contemplation and quietness; men of mild, and sweet, and peaceable spirits, as indeed most Anglers are: these men our blessed Saviour, who is observed to love to plant grace in good natures, though indeed nothing be too hard for him, yet these men he chose to call from their unreprovable employment of fishing, and gave them grace to be his disciples, and to follow him, and do wonders." Even so had the Lord of old taken David from the sheepfolds, and brought him from following the ewes great with young to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance (cf. 2 Sam. vii. 8; Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71); admonishing us by these examples that the lowliest lot has its proper pathway to exaltation, and that promotion ever comes, "not like an elf from the wild forests, but like an angel on the daily path," blessing the man who accepts his appointed place in godly contentment and walks faithfully and lovingly therein.

> Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
> The path of duty was the way to glory:
> He, that ever following her commands,
> On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
> Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
> His path upward, and prevail'd,
> Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
> Are close upon the shining table-lands
> To which our God Himself is moon and sun.

Is it not significant that in every instance where the calling of an Apostle is recorded, the Lord found him busy at his worldly employment—those fishermen at their nets, Matthew the taxgatherer at the receipt of custom?

Hard by other two brothers, James and John, were seated

in their boat—not "ship," since there were no ships on a little inland lake—with their father Zebedee, mending their nets for the next night's fishing. Like Simon and Andrew John had met Jesus at Bethabara, and his testimony on his return home had won his father and brother. These also He called, and they as promptly obeyed. Not without significance is it written that they left not only their boat but their father. They left him sitting solitary in the boat to finish the mending of the nets and thenceforth to put out single-handed to the fishing. It was hard for him to be thus bereft and to bear the burden alone in his declining years; yet he raised no protest. He let them go without a murmur. Truly their devotion to the Kingdom of Heaven was more than matched by his; nor would it go unnoticed and unrequited by the Master. It is ever thus. One thinks of the desolate mother in the Scottish ballad:

> "Oh, I hae seven braw sons," she says:
> "I bare them toiling sairly;
> But gin I had a hundred mae,
> I'd tyne them a' for King Charlie."

It is not what we do but what we lose for Christ that is most precious in His sight. Surely on His roll of honour there are places not alone for those who fought the good fight but for those who with a still deeper devotion sent them forth at His call.

PROSPECTUS OF THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

iv. 23–25

23 *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*

24 *And his fame went throughout all Syria : and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy ; and he healed them.*

25 *And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan.*

THE Evangelist here outlines the wonderful story which he is about to tell. Capernaum was merely the headquarters of our Lord's Galilean ministry, and ever and anon He would quit the town and travel hither and thither until the whole province had heard His message. Wherever He went He found a ready and effective opportunity, since at that period—thanks to the zeal of the Scribes, the learned order of the Pharisees—every Jewish community had its synagogue, and the practice was that when a qualified stranger appeared, he should be invited to address the congregation (cf. Ac. xiii. 15). There were not only two meetings of the congregation every Sabbath Day but two week-day meetings —on the second day of the week (Monday) and the fifth (Thursday). Our Lord was constant in His attendance (cf. Lk. iv. 16), and everywhere there was an eager and ever-growing interest in the new prophet. Nor was His ministry confined to the synagogues. In street and field He would discourse to the folk who gathered about Him, and His theme was always "the Gospel of the Kingdom." Here for the first time the

Evangelist introduces that gracious word "Gospel" or, as it is in Greek, "Evangel." It was no new word but an old word with a new meaning. It is as old as Homer, and in his day it signified the reward of one who brought good tidings. Later it meant the offering of thanksgiving to the gods, and later still the good tidings themselves. This is its meaning here and everywhere in the New Testament. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country"; and what news is so good for poor weary pilgrims as the tidings which the Saviour has brought from the far country whither they are travelling—tidings of a Father's love, a Father's House, and a Father's welcome home? Nor did He merely preach the Gospel. He exemplified it, demonstrating the Father's compassion by working miracles of compassion in the Father's name. It was naturally this phase of His ministry that made the strongest and most general appeal, especially His healing of three distressful and desperate maladies: madness or, as it was called in those days, "demoniacal possession"; epilepsy, for this was the meaning of "lunacy" then (cf. R.V.); and palsy. No wonder His fame spread abroad, northward to heathen Syria, eastward to Decapolis, and southward to Peræa, the country beyond the Jordan, Judæa, and Jerusalem; and from near and far they gathered with their griefs and sufferings to the mighty Healer.

"THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT" (v–vii)

BESIDES his supreme purpose of exhibiting our Lord to his Jewish compatriots as their promised Messiah St. Matthew had also the subordinate but more generally needful and abidingly useful purpose of recording His teaching. And hereof a striking example is furnished by this long discourse which ever since it was so entitled by St. Augustine has been known as "the Sermon on the Mount." In fact it is not a single discourse but a collection of discourses delivered on various occasions and to various audiences, woven together and placed here at the beginning of the Gospel as a sort of frontispiece illustrating the manner of the Heavenly Teacher; and St. Luke, in pursuance of his express design of "tracing the course of all things accurately from the first" (i. 3 R.V.), has rearranged its components in their historical connections. Thus (1) v. 1–16, 39–48, vii. 1–6, 15–27 is our Lord's Ordination Address to the Twelve (cf. Lk. vi. 20–49); (2) vi. 9–15, vii. 7–12 belongs to His Lesson on Prayer (cf. Lk. xi. 1–13); (3) vii. 13, 14 to His answer to the question "Are there few that be saved?" (cf. Lk. xiii. 23–30); and (4) vi. 19–34 to His discourse on Worldly-mindedness (cf. Lk. xii. 13–34). And what of v. 17–38, vi. 1–8, 16–18? All this—except v. 25, 26, which St. Luke gives as an isolated saying (cf. xii. 58, 59)—is peculiar to St. Matthew; and there is reason for recognising it as a report of our Lord's first discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum (cf. Mt. vii. 28, 29 with Mk. i. 22 and Lk. iv. 32).

THE BEATITUDES

V. 1–12

1 *And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:*

2 *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,*

3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*

4 *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

5 *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

6 *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

7 *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

8 *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

9 *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

10 *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*

11 *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely, for my sake.*

12 *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

WHEN our Lord thus withdrew from the multitude, it was never for lack of interest in them or of sympathy with them, but sometimes because He was weary with much discoursing to them and needed repose, and sometimes because He would address Himself to the urgent task of instructing His disciples. The latter was His reason now. He retired with them to the upland behind Capernaum that He might ordain them to their high ministry and discourse to them at

* Gr. *lying*.

once of its privileges and of its perplexities. After the manner of a Jewish teacher (cf. Lk. iv. 20) He "sat down" (R.V.) and so discoursed to them, beginning with a series of benedictions which, paradoxical as they appear to us, would be intelligible and inspiring to their Jewish minds. For "the poor," "the mourners," and "the meek" were phrases which bore a well-defined significance in that period of national oppression. They denoted the faithful who clung to the ancient promises and "waited for the consolation of Israel," refusing to purchase worldly ease by disloyalty to their fathers' God; and when He pronounced these "blessed," it was an assurance that the day of their visitation had arrived and their hope was now at length fulfilled.

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." St. Luke (vi. 20) has simply "the poor," and this, being the recognised phrase, is all that our Lord said; but St. Matthew's limitation is a true definition of His meaning, and it was needful for the prevention of misconception on the part of his Jewish readers. For among the suffering Jews in those days there was a strong disposition to asceticism which found its fullest expression in the Essene glorification of poverty. And therefore the Evangelist defines "the poor" according to our Lord's intention as "the poor in spirit." There is no virtue in mere privation but rather degradation and embitterment. It is sanctified poverty that is blessed—poverty accepted lovingly and endured uncomplainingly when God appoints it. "Glad povert is an honest thing, certeyn," says Chaucer, quoting from Seneca a maxim of the ancient philosopher Epicurus. And this is "evangelical poverty." It lies not in mere penury but in one's attitude toward worldly possessions and the value which one puts upon these. And thus emerges the paradox that one may inherit the benediction of "the poor" though he have untold riches, and one may miss it though he be destitute.

2. "Blessed are they that mourn." It is the same order that our Lord has here in view—those true patriots who sorrowed for their people's affliction like the prophet in the day of Jerusalem's calamity (Jer. ix. 1): "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep

day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" It was promised of old (Is. lxi. 1–3 R.V. marg.) that the Messiah would comfort "the poor who mourned in Zion"; and here as afterwards in the synagogue of Nazareth (cf. Lk. iv. 17–21) He announces the fulfilment of that scripture. It was not for their own but for Israel's affliction that they mourned; and their comfort was her deliverance—the establishment of "the Kingdom of Heaven" after a larger and nobler fashion than they had ever dreamed.

3. "Blessed are the meek." So it had been written of old (cf. Ps. xxxvii. 11): "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." See what the Psalmist means. He is dealing with that ancient and abiding problem—wherefore it is that evildoers prosper in the world and the righteous suffer.

> O why has worth so short a date,
> While villains ripen, grey with crime?

And his argument is that this is a hasty judgment. "The end crowns the work," and a long view discovers the justice of the moral order. The doom of wrong, howsoever it may triumph at the moment, is written on every page of history. Think of ancient tyrannies—how they all "perished in the blood which they had spilt," and their memory is now had in execration. And in modern times no nation has trodden the ancient path without incurring the ancient doom. Though it may devastate the earth for a season, violence has never inherited the earth and never can inherit it. It is meekness that prevails. For what is meekness? It is more than humility; neither is it weakness and still less cowardice. Its scriptural exemplar is Moses. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. xii. 3). And he was neither a weakling nor a coward. He was the grandest of Israel's heroes, and the martial exploits of Joshua, Gideon, Samson, and David are poor and mean in comparison with his achievements. And what was it that made him great? It was his vision of God and His redeeming purpose; and this wrought in him two golden qualities. One was a spirit of

self-effacement, inasmuch as he realised that he was God's instrument, and if only God's purpose were accomplished, he cared not what might befall himself (cf. Ex. xxxii. 31, 32). And the other was an unwearying patience with his rebellious people. Recognising that he was but God's instrument, he recognised that their wrong was done to God and not to him, and he felt only pity for their ignorance and foolishness. Self-effacement, patience, and pity—these are the elements of meekness, and they are the qualities which make a hero. For self-effacement is devotion to a cause transcending all personal and petty interests; patience is a recognition of the strength of one's cause and a secure faith in its ultimate triumph; and pity is the chivalrous instinct which abhors cruelty and kindles at injustice. And these are the qualities which exalt men and nations.

And truly to possess the earth is one thing, and to inherit it another. "As I thus sat," says Isaak Walton, "joying in my own happy condition, and pitying this poor rich man that owned this and many other pleasant groves and meadows about me, I did thankfully remember what my Saviour said, that the meek possess the earth; or, rather, they enjoy what the others possess, and enjoy not. . . . I knew a man that had health and riches; and several houses, all beautiful, and ready furnished; and would often trouble himself and family to be removing from one house to another: and being asked by a friend why he removed so often from one house to another, replied, 'It was to find content in some one of them.' But his friend, knowing his temper, told him, 'If he would find content in any of his houses, he must leave himself behind him; for content will never dwell but in a meek and quiet soul.'"

How happy is he born or taught,
That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his highest skill!

This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise, or feare to fall;
Lord of himselfe, though not of lands;
And having nothing, yet hath all.

4. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst." This, according to St. Luke (vi. 21), is all that our Lord said; but here again, in view of the ascetic spirit of his day, the Evangelist defines His meaning by the addition "after righteousness." It is the soul's hunger and thirst that our Lord means, the restless yearning which aches in every human breast and which differentiates man from "sheep or goats that nourish a blind life within the brain," the evidence of his immortality and the pledge of an infinite possibility. "Ye may lauch at a bairn," says George MacDonald in *Alec Forbes*, "for greitin' efter the mune; but I doot that same avarice o' the wee man comes frae a something within him that he wad be ill aff wi'oot. Better greit for the mune than no be cawpable o' greitin' for the mune." The yearning is unquenchable, and all our human misery comes of failure to recognise where its satisfaction lies. Wealth cannot satisfy it, or fame; for, says Seneca, "a great fortune is but a great bondage," and "a great career," says George Sand, "is but a heavy cross, and glory is a crown of thorns." Neither can knowledge; for learning is but a discovery of ignorance and, says Seneca, "truth once known loses its charm." And least of all can sensual indulgence. The poet, dowered with genius, rank, and wealth, had drunk deep of the poisoned cup when, only six and thirty years of age yet sick of life and bitter of heart, he thus bewailed his disillusionment:

> My days are in the yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone!

Where then lies the satisfaction which the soul craves? St. Augustine proclaims the truth in that oft-quoted sentence at the beginning of his *Confessions*: "Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it find rest in Thee." Every creature finds satisfaction in the realisation of its nature; and since man was created in the image of God, it can never be well with him until he recognises his divine kinship. The love of God is our native air, and its breath is our proper life. And therefore there is no satisfaction for us apart from Him. "Toss

out Nature with a pitchfork," says the Latin poet, "yet she will always run back"; and the soul's discontent with the best the world affords is an inarticulate assertion of its heavenly affinity and its ineradicable need. "This," said a wise Rabbi of old, "may be likened in a parable to a simple citizen who married a princess of the royal blood. Even if he made her to eat of all the delicacies in the world and gave her every delight, he could never fulfil all his obligations to her. Wherefore? Because she was the daughter of a line of kings. And even so, whatever a man may do for his own soul, he can never do all that is required of him, because the soul of man is from on high."

And thus a not unkindly world
Hath done its best for me;
Yet I have found, O God! no rest,
No harbour short of Thee.

For Thou hast made this wondrous soul
All for Thyself alone;
Ah! send Thy sweet transforming grace
To make it more Thine own.

Blessed are we that we have this "divine despair" within our breasts; thrice blessed if we recognise whither it is driving us. "By desiring what is perfectly good," says Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, "even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower." In a baffling and dimly lighted world it is seldom that life is more than a frustrated endeavour and a blind groping; but if it be God that we are hungering and thirsting after, it is no futile quest.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by.

5. " Blessed are the merciful." It is not God's mercy that our Lord here promises to the merciful, but rather the mercy of their fellow men. For, as we have seen, He was discoursing to the Twelve on the occasion of their ordination, and here He imparts to them a golden secret which, if they practised it, would smooth their pathway in the prosecution of their ministry. " All the events of a tragic and varied life," confessed Margaret of Anjou, the haughty and merciless queen of Henry VI, in the bitter days of her exile, " have led me to see that there is no such thing as an inconsiderable enemy." Alas that she had learned the lesson too late! Truly it is our wisdom, while we may, to refrain from needless provocation and lose no opportunity of winning affection by gracious courtesies and kindly offices. " 'Tis kindness," says the Greek dramatist, " that still begets kindness " ; and for everyone a day surely comes when the kindness of his fellow men is exceeding precious to him, and when every hasty, bitter word he ever spoke is remembered against him. " I do not much wonder," wrote Lord Macaulay, " at the violence of the hatred which Socrates had provoked. He had, evidently, a thorough love for making men look small. There was a meek maliciousness about him which gave wounds such as must have smarted long, and his command of temper was more provoking than noisy triumph and insolence would have been."

6. " Blessed are the pure in heart." It is a saying of Goethe that " the eye sees only so much as it brings with it the power of seeing." Our bodily senses are the avenues of communication between our souls and the outer world. The town of Mansoul has five gates—Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, Nose-gate, and Feel-gate ; but nothing can enter by a closed door. There must be a receptive soul behind it. A seeing eye is not enough without an understanding heart. Thus, for example, the beauty of earth and sky " lies expans'd before all eyes " ; yet one man, in Sterne's phrase, " can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry, 'Tis all barren," while to another

> the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

It is the same world for both and both behold it, and it is the poet's soul that makes the difference—" a sense of law and beauty, and a face turned from the clod."

And precisely so with the vision of God.

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God:
> But only he who sees, takes off his shoes.

It is not the physical eye, however keen, that sees God; it is the heart behind it. " I have searched the heavens with my telescope," announced the astronomer Lalande, " and nowhere have I seen God." It was as though an anatomist, like Marat in Dumas's *Memoirs of a Physician*, should probe the body with his scalpel to find the soul. And surely it were a foolish quest.

> God is not found by the tests that detect you an acid or salt.
> While you search only for secrets that process of science sets free,
> Nothing you'll find in the world but matter to handle or see.
> Here is a book I am reading now; what can your method find there?
> What does it show you but paper and ink and leather and thread?
> But where is the thought, that is all the end and use of the book,
> And which flows on through its pages clear to my mind as a brook
> Rippling and singing sweet music to him that hath ears to hear?
> Have you an acid will test it? a glass that will make it all clear?
> Or scalpel to cut it?

Just as it is " the poet's dream " that sees " the light that never was, on sea or land," so it is not the fleshly eye but, says our Lord, " the pure heart " that sees God.

And what is a " pure " or " clean heart "? It is a phrase of the Old Testament (cf. Pss. xxiv. 4, li. 10, lxxiii. 1), and there it means a heart recreated and illumined by heavenly grace and possessed by the peace of God, in contrast with a heart vexed by worldly cares and passions and darkened by the defilement of sin. " The wicked," said the ancient prophet (Is. lvii. 20), " are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt." But " He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still "; and then its peaceful bosom mirrors the stars. And what says the Apostle (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 18)? " Reflecting as a mirror the glory

of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory." "If thy heart were right," says St. Thomas à Kempis, "then every creature would be a mirror of life and a book of holy teaching. There is no creature so small and worthless that it doth not represent the goodness of God. If thou wert good and pure within, then all things wouldst thou see without impediment and grasp well. A pure heart penetrates heaven and hell."

It is written on the first page of Holy Scripture that "God created man in His own image"; and though defiled and defaced by the rude soiling of sin, the divine tracery remains, and it shines out afresh when our souls are cleansed and recreated by the Holy Spirit. Every human soul as God created it and as He recreates it after the primal image bears His likeness and displays Him to itself and to others. Hence it is that, when our Lord would reveal God to us, He points us to our holy and tender human affections and bids us recognise in these adumbrations of God. "If ye," He says, "being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more your Heavenly Father?"

> Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast
> Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:
> Though He is so bright and we so dim,
> We are made in His image to witness Him.

And St. John unfolded the lesson when he wrote and rewrote with unwearied reiteration in his first epistle that "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." A pure heart is a loving heart, and a loving heart is God's image.

> O Love Divine, that claspest our tired earth,
> And lullest it upon thy heart,
> Thou knowest how much a gentle soul is worth
> To teach men what thou art!

7. "Blessed are the peacemakers." Always a most needful admonition but especially needful in those restless days when the Messianic Hope was a dream of a national deliverer, and indignant patriots were ever ready to rise in desperate rebellion against the oppressor. Our Lord would here have His disciples

understand that His "Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven" was no political propaganda. It was a "Gospel of peace," revealing the universal Fatherhood of God and by necessary consequence the universal brotherhood of man. Brotherhood is a corollary of common sonship, and only as we "follow after peace with all men" do we realise our filial relationship with "the God of peace."

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is man, His child and care.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.

8. "Blessed are they that are persecuted" or rather "have been persecuted for righteousness' sake," as the Revised Version rightly has it. For their blessedness is not immediate. At the moment persecution is a cruel ordeal, "not joyous but grievous"; and only when it has been resolutely and believingly faced does the blessedness appear. And what is the blessedness of the persecuted? It is threefold. (1) Like the humble poor (cf. ver. 3) they have the heartening assurance that "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Their sufferings are not wasted, since, in a phrase of Tertullian which has passed into a proverb, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man," said Latimer to his fellow martyr as the faggots kindled about them at Oxford in 1553: "we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust never shall be put out." (2) "Great," says our Lord, "is your reward" or, as Wycliffe has it, following the Latin Vulgate, "your mede is plenteous in heaven." Here it is a matter of faith that their sufferings are serving the advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven; but when they pass hence into the light of God's face, they will see it, and as they witness the ever fuller unfolding of His purpose, they will "rejoice and be exceeding glad"

for the part which they bore in bringing it to pass. And (3) even here they have the inspiration of a goodly fellowship, since they are treading the path where the prophets went before them.

> Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes—they were souls that stood alone,
> While the men they agonised for hurled the contumelious stone,
> Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline
> To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine.

Observe, however, how careful our Lord is, in thus exhibiting the blessedness of the persecuted, to define its conditions. "Blessed are ye," He says, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely," literally "lying." Here is the first condition: our sufferings must be undeserved. For, says shrewd Mrs. Cadwallader in *Middlemarch*, "it's not martyrdom to pay bills that one has run into one's self." Even in a good cause it is possible to give needless offence. And our Lord lays down a second condition when He adds "for My sake." To suffer merely "for righteousness' sake" is Stoicism, and Stoicism makes men stern and defiant. To suffer "for Christ's sake" is to "know the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. iii. 10); and this is blessedness. "I verily think," wrote Samuel Rutherfurd, a banished man on his way to prison, "being," as he puts it, "on my journey to Christ's palace in Aberdeen, August 4, 1636," "the chains of my Lord Jesus are all overlaid with pure gold, and that his cross is perfumed, and that it smelleth of Christ"; and again from that prison which for him was Christ's palace: "My crosses come through mercy and love's fingers, from the kind heart of a Brother, Christ my Lord; and therefore must be sweet and sugared. O what am I! such a lump, such a rotten mass of sin, to be counted a bairn worthy to be nurtured and stricken with the best and most honourable rod in my Father's house, the golden rod, wherewith my eldest Brother, the Lord, heir of the inheritance, and his faithful witnesses were stricken withal."

A DISCIPLE'S OFFICE IN THE WORLD

v. 13–16

13 *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

14 *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

15 *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under *a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

BY a series of homely metaphors which would appeal especially to His fisher disciples, our Lord shows them how they should bear themselves toward the world as His witnesses and the heralds of His Evangel.

1. "Ye are the salt of the earth." The use of salt is two-fold: (1) It preserves from corruption, as they knew very well. For how soon in that sultry climate their nightly harvest of the Lake was wasted unless promptly conveyed to the pickleries at Taricheæ! And even so a holy life is as a wholesome savour. "What the life is in the body," said an unknown saint of the second century, "this Christians are in the world." A lifeless body is a putrefying carcase. (2) It relishes food, making it palatable. "Can that which has no savour be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" (Job vi. 6). It illumines our Lord's meaning to remember that both in Greek and in Latin "salt" signified "wit," and it was proverbial of one destitute of humour

* The word in the original signifieth *a measure containing about a pint less than a peck.*

that "there was no salt in him." Humour, if it be kindly, being nothing else than a perception of the fitness of things, a sense of perspective and proportion, is indeed "a saving grace." It is truly the salt of human intercourse, lending it flavour and redeeming it not merely from dullness and stupidity but from harshness and cruelty. And, says Samuel Rutherfurd, "Wisdom's scholars are not fools: Grace is a witty and understanding spirit, ripe and sharp." It is like the sunshine and the breeze—glad and wholesome. Hence, when our Lord styles His disciples "the salt of the earth," He means that by their very presence in the world they should diffuse *holiness* and *happiness*, after the manner of "those benignant lovely souls who, without astonishing the public and posterity, make a happy difference in the lives close around them, and in this way lift the average of earthly joy." It was an ancient maxim that "nothing is more useful than salt" by reason of the variety of its culinary and medicinal virtues; and, on the other hand, nothing is more useless than salt which has "lost its savour," insipid salt. It is worse than useless; for, says Thomson in *The Land and the Book*, "it is not only good for nothing itself, but it actually destroys all fertility wherever it is thrown. So troublesome is it that it is carefully swept up, carried forth, and thrown into the street." An honest worldling has his use in the world, but a graceless professor is serviceable neither to the world nor to the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. "Ye are the light of the world." Afterwards our Lord said (cf. Jo. viii. 12) "I am the light of the world," thus reminding us that our light is not our own, but a reflection of His glory (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 18). It is no abrupt change of metaphor when He adds, "A city set on an hill cannot be hid," but rather an interpretation of the previous sentence; and His meaning would be plain to the disciples. Perched high on the eastern side of the Lake and gleaming white in the sunshine, stood the town of Gerasa; and they would recall how often its lights had cheered their vigil as they swung by their nets, or served them as a beacon, guiding them to the haven when moon and stars were hidden in the gloom of a sudden tempest, like the feeble glimmer

from the uncurtained window of the widow of Dunskaith in Hugh Miller's tale of the Moray Firth. Only a candle in a poor cottage, but

> How far that little candle throws his beams!
> So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

It is not enough that the candle be lit: it must be displayed—"put on the stand" and not, says our Lord in proverbial phrase, "under the bushel-measure" (cf. R.V.) or, as we might say, "in a dark lantern," after the fashion of the pious Essenes, those Jewish forerunners of the Christian monastics, who secluded themselves from the world in the Wilderness of En-Gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Their light shone, but no one saw it and no one was moved by their "good" or, as the word rather means, their "beautiful works" to "glorify their Father in Heaven." A recluse is like a miser; hidden holiness is like hoarded wealth.

> Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves, for if our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
> As if we had them not.

OUR LORD'S ATTITUDE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

v. 17–20

17 *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

18 *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

19 *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

20 *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

HERE, as we have seen, the Evangelist introduces a passage from our Lord's first discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, defining His attitude toward the ancient order of faith and worship or, as He expresses it, " the Law and the Prophets "—a Jewish phrase for the revelation recorded in the scriptures of the Old Testament. And indeed it was most needful that He should define His attitude thereto ; for He was more than a reformer : He was the Messiah come to " make all things new," and at such a crisis there is ever a perilous conflict between two antagonistic dispositions—the revolutionary spirit which would relegate the old order to oblivion, and the conservative spirit which clings blindly to it and would fain perpetuate it. Both alike are disastrous, and our Lord repudiates both. First He announces that He had not come to destroy the old order but to fulfil it. Observe the significance of His language here. " Destroy " is the same word in the original which He employs later when He speaks of the " throwing down " or " demolition " of the Temple by the sacrilegious hands of the Roman invaders (xxiv. 2 ; cf. xxvi. 61, xxvii. 40 ;

Ac. vi. 14). And as a correlative term "fulfil" means "complete." Hence the idea here is that the ancient order was like a sacred edifice, some noble Temple, which had been long a-building; and He had not come to "throw it down." Neither had He come merely like the prophets of each successive generation to continue the work. He had come to "complete" it, strip away the scaffolding, and reveal the full glory of the stately pile. Observe how He emphasises the permanence of the old order. He begins with that phrase "verily" which, occurring here for the first time, was so frequent on His lips when He would bespeak the attention and credence of His hearers. In the original it is *amen*—a Hebrew word which served (1) as a strong asseveration (cf. Num. v. 22; Dt. xxvii. 15; 1 Ki. i. 36) and (2) as a response to a prayer, "so be it" (cf. Pss. xli. 13, lxxii. 19, lxxxix. 53; 1 Cor. xiv. 16). Here as always on our Lord's lips it is an asseveration; and what He thus affirms is the imperishable value of the ancient Law. Never would there pass away a single "jot"—an *iota*, the smallest letter of the alphabet, or a single "tittle" or "tip"—the tail of a letter; as we should say, the dot of an "i" or the stroke of a "t"—the merest trifle. "Be not impatient of trifles: grace upon trifles attendeth." The historian Gibbon marvelled at the furious contests between the *Homoousians* and the *Homoiousians* in the Arian controversy. It was a single *iota* that made the difference; yet on that single *iota* hung the life of the Church and the hope of humanity.

It may seem as though our Lord retracted His affirmation of the permanence of the Law when He adds "until all be fulfilled"; but it is not so. Rather He here passes to the other side of the question, and warns us against the spirit which glorifies the past, that "worship of light ancestral" which "makes the present light a crime." While He had not come to demolish the ancient order, He had come to complete it, and by completing it He invested it with a larger sanctity and filled it with a deeper meaning.

> Children of men! not that your age excel
> In pride of life the ages of your sires,
> But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
> The Friend of man desires.

He has indeed destroyed nothing, but He has left nothing as it was, nothing unchanged. He has transfigured all by attaching to every ancient ordinance a larger interpretation and to every ancient commandment a more extensive obligation. Here lies the momentous difference which He has made; and He now proceeds to exemplify it.

HIS ENLARGEMENT OF THE ANCIENT LAW

1. "*THOU SHALT NOT KILL*"

v. 21–26

21 *Ye have heard that it was said* *by them of old time, *Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

22 *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother,* †*Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

23 *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;*

24 *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

25 *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer and thou be cast into prison.*

26 *Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

THIS His first example is the sixth commandment of the Decalogue (Ex. xx. 13) and the judicial procedure which, according to the ancient Law (cf. Dt. xvii. 8, 9), followed upon its violation. "Ye have heard"—not "read," since in those days copies of the Law were scarce and costly and the people for the most part knew it by hearing it read in the synagogues (cf. Ac. xv. 21)—" that it was said to (R.V.) them of old time," literally " the ancients," suggesting that, as He is about to

*Or, *to them.* †That is, *Vain fellow.*

show, the common understanding of the commandment was now antiquated. And how does He enlarge it? He includes within its censure not merely the act but the spirit that prompts it. When St. John writes in his first epistle (iii. 15) that "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," he puts plainly what our Lord here expresses in a picturesque and arresting fashion. Hatred is the motive of murder, but He goes farther back, and traces the rise and progress of the murderous passion.

1. It begins with anger: "whosoever is angry with his brother." There are indeed occasions when anger is justified (cf. Mk. iii. 5; Eph. iv. 26), and our English text adds "without a cause"; but anger is generally an evil thing, and our Lord was wont to state general truths without staying to indicate their obvious limitations, and here the limitation, absent from the best manuscripts, is a homiletic comment by a later hand. Of mere anger the law took no account, and only when it issued in violence was the offender "in danger of the judgment" or rather "in the grip of judicial procedure"; but, says our Lord, "whosoever is angry with his brother," though he never lift his hand, "shall be in the grip of judicial procedure." That is to say, he was, in God's sight, on a par with one arraigned for assault before the local court of the Rulers of the Synagogue.

2. "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca." Here is a long-standing puzzle. Somewhat precariously *raca* has been taken etymologically in the sense of "vain fellow" (cf. 2 Sam. vi. 20; Ja. ii. 20); but St. Augustine tells us, on the authority of "a certain Hebrew" whom he had consulted, that it was nothing but a scornful expletive "with no precise significance but merely expressing the stirring of a disdainful mind." And that was indeed its use among the Jews. It is told, for example, in the Talmud that "a Gentile said to an Israelite: 'Most fitting food is prepared for you at my house.' 'What sort is it?' asked the other. 'Swine's flesh' was the reply. 'Faugh (*raca*)!' said the Jew." It was an ejaculation of disgust; and thus our Lord's meaning appears. "Whosoever"—passing from anger to contempt—"shall say to his brother, 'Faugh!' shall be in the grip of the council"—rather

" the Sanhedrin," the supreme Jewish court which dealt with religious questions, especially the capital crime of blasphemy. And so our Lord here pronounces contempt toward a fellow man made in God's image nothing less than blasphemy (cf. Ja. iii. 9).

3. And what if one pass from contempt to vituperation? " Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in the grip of "—not " hell fire " but—" the Gehenna of fire." Gehenna is the Greek transliteration of *ge-hinnom*, " the Valley of Hinnom " ; and this was the once pleasant valley to the south-east of Jerusalem which, ever since its desecration by King Josiah as the scene of apostate Israel's idolatry (cf. 2 Ki. xxiii. 10), had served as the refuse-depôt of the city. It was a loathsome den, choked with stench and putrefaction, being the depository of the bodies of those wretches who suffered the ignominious doom of crucifixion ; and fires were kept continually burning in it to purify the pestilential atmosphere (cf. Is. lxvi. 24 ; Mk. ix. 48). And so our Lord's affirmation here is that one who assails a fellow man with coarse abuse, ranks in God's judgment with the vilest of criminals.

It is impossible for one who harbours enmity against a fellow man to be at peace with God ; and our Lord enforces this truth by a Rabbinical precept familiar to His Jewish hearers. The Law required that no leaven should remain in a Jewish house during the Holy Week, " the days of unleavened bread " ; and the duty is thus enjoined in the directory for the observance of the Passover : " If one is betaking himself to the offering of his paschal lamb, and it come into his mind that he has leaven in his house, let him, if he can, return and remove it, and then resume his office ; but if he cannot, let him destroy it in his heart." Leaven signified figuratively " the evil affections which work in our hearts " ; and if it were needful according to the ancient Law to purge one's house of literal leaven ere approaching the altar of God, most needful surely is it to purge one's heart of " the leaven of malice and wickedness " (cf. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8).

Thus our Lord counsels one who is himself in fault. " First," He says, " be reconciled to thy brother," employing in the

original a word which implies that the offence is mutual. But what if the offence be all on one side and your adversary be, in Shakespeare's phrase, an "action-taking knave" who, too cowardly to strike, resorts to vexatious and oppressive litigation and drags you into the law-court? Nothing ever comes of litigation but incurable embitterment and loss alike for loser and for winner; and the wisdom of all ages testifies that it is better to suffer any injustice than go to law,

> And rather put up Injuries, than be
> A Plague to him who'd be a Plague to me.

"There is utterly a fault among you," says the Apostle (1 Cor. vi. 7), "because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"

> Full little knowest thou, that hast not tried,
> What hell it is in suing long to bide:
> To lose good days that might be better spent;
> To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
> To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
> To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
> To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.

"Agree, for the law is costly," was an Elizabethan proverb; and like it was the Jewish proverb: "While you are in the way (to the law-court), agree with your adversary." Precisely this is the half-humorous counsel which our Lord here gives; and its wisdom appears when one remembers the notorious venality of Oriental judges. Verdicts were shamelessly bought and sold; and, even when a prisoner had been pronounced innocent, he might be detained until he had "paid his last farthing" to purchase his release (cf. Ac. xxiv. 26).

2. "THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"

v. 27–30

27 *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:*

28 *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

29 *And if thy right eye *offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

30 *And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

DESIRE is natural and inevitable, and sin lies in harbouring it and looking with a lustful intent. "There are," says St. Augustine, "three things whereby sin is accomplished; suggestion, delight, and consent." "First," says St. Thomas à Kempis, "there occurs to the mind simple thought, next strong imagination, afterwards delight and wicked impulse and assent." The simple thought is temptation, and thus far there is no sin. For sin lies not in being tempted but in yielding or, in the phrase of mediæval devotion, not in the sense (*sensus*) but in the consent (*consensus*). In the days of His flesh our Blessed Lord was indeed "in all points tempted like as we are";

> But, though He felt temptation's pow'r,
> Unconquer'd He remain'd;
> Nor, 'midst the frailty of our frame,
> By sin was ever stain'd.

There is no sin in temptation; rather is it a moral and spiritual discipline. "There is no harm," says St. Bernard, "in the

* Or, *do cause thee to offend.*

sense where there is no consent ; rather the fatigue of resistance wins the crown of victory." Hence that exhortation of St. James (i. 2) : " My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Recognise, he means, that you have been ushered into the lists, and do your devoir like gallant knights. Rally your manhood, play the hero, and fling yourselves into the conflict with

> the stern joy which warriors feel
> In foemen worthy of their steel.

" A good knight," says Sir Walter, " is best known in battle, and a good Christian in the time of trouble and adversity."

There is, then, no sin in the " simple thought." It begins with the " strong imagination " which dwells upon the thought and gloats over it. " Whatever," says Darwin in *The Descent of Man*, " makes any bad action familiar to the mind, renders its performance so much the easier " ; and thus delight leads to consent and therewith, unless dread of consequences or lack of opportunity prevent, to the wicked act. Hence the evil desire and the evil deed are alike heinous. Moral disaster is never really sudden, since it is always in the hidden arena of the heart that the issue is decided, in accordance with " that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil which gradually determines character."

Sensuality is fatal. It wrecks the body, enfeebles the mind, and corrodes the heart.

> I waive the quantum o' the sin,
> The hazard of concealing :
> But och ! it hardens a' within,
> And petrifies the feeling.

When it has done its work, the man is fit only to be " cast into " —not " hell " but—" Gehenna." What does this dread sentence mean ? Literally, as we have seen, the refuse-depôt of the Holy City, Gehenna also signified figuratively the final destination of those who by obdurate persistence in evil have so corrupted their souls that the very possibility of moral amendment is eaten out of them and they are nothing else than mere

moral refuse. What wonder that, recognising in the light of His own stainless purity the malignity of sin and the ruin which it entails, our Lord should have admonished us thereof with peculiar solemnity? He bids us deal ruthlessly with everything that would "offend" us or, as it is in the Revised Version, "cause us to stumble." The word means properly "ensnare," the cognate noun, according to the ancient lexicographer, denoting "a mouse-trap." Whatever it be that ensnares us—even the right hand or the right eye—must be sacrificed.

This stern requirement has often been literally practised. Whatever be the truth of the late story of Democritus of Abdera, the Greek philosopher of the fifth century B.C., that he blinded both his eyes lest the sight of vanity should interrupt his meditations, it is a fact that not a few devoted Christians, like Origen, have mutilated themselves in obedience, as they deemed, to the evangelic precept (cf. Mt. xix. 12). But was this indeed our Lord's requirement? St. Chrysostom justly remarks that He mentions here only the right eye and the right hand, and, though these were gone, the left would still suffice for our ensnaring. And, furthermore, self-mutilation were in truth a cowardly and faithless expedient. "He," says Milton, "that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd and unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for not without dust and heat." The evangelic requirement is not the mortification of the flesh but its consecration. Our bodies no less than our souls are God's, and "in His book all our members are written" (Ps. cxxxix. 16). They are precious in His sight, and He has bestowed all-sufficient grace for their sanctification to His honour and glory.

What then does our Lord mean? Here as so often His language is proverbial. Of our double members the right was accounted the worthier (cf. Ex. xxix. 20; 1 Sam. xi. 2); and in common parlance "the right eye" or "the right hand" was a figure for anything which one prizes and would be loath

to lose. In his Life of that famous sophist Isæus the Assyrian, after describing the licentiousness of his youth, Philostratus tells how he was transformed by his devotion to philosophy. All that had once delighted him he abandoned; it was "as though he had cast away his former eyes." There could be no apter comment on this requirement of our Lord. Realise the solemnity of the issues, and no pleasure will seem too alluring, no indulgence too sweet to be resolutely abjured.

The dearest idol I have known,
  Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
  And worship only Thee!

3. *THE LAW OF DIVORCE*

v. 31, 32

31 *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:*

32 *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*

THE contemporary practice of divorce could not fail to engage our Lord's keen and sympathetic interest, since it bore very cruelly and unjustly upon womenfolk. The ancient law was in brief: "Whosoever puts away his wife, let him give her a deed of divorcement" (cf. Dt. xxiv. 1–4), the requirement being that the reason should be definitely specified in order that, if she could, she might vindicate her innocence. The only reason recognised as valid was that "she found no favour" in her husband's eyes, because he had found some unseemly thing in her; and the question was raised what precisely this might denote. According to the strict school of the Rabbi Shammai it signified connubial unfaithfulness; but the liberal school of Hillel gave it a wider scope, alleging that a man might put away his wife "for any reason" (Mt. xix. 3)—if he hated her; if he were dissatisfied with her cookery; if he saw another whom he fancied more, according to Rabbi Akiba's interpretation of the clause "if she should find no favour in his eyes." Such was the common procedure in our Lord's day, and no wonder it was reprobated by the Friend of the oppressed. See how He deals with it here. First He reaffirms what was surely the intention of the ancient law—that unfaithfulness to the marriage covenant was the sole justification of divorce, the reason being that, since marriage is a covenant and a covenant is *ipso facto* annulled when violated by either party, divorce is in this case merely the recognition of a *fait accompli*. Then

He indicates where lay the iniquity of putting away a wife who was faithful to her marriage vow. It was twofold: (1) It made her an adulteress. A *divorcée* was at liberty to marry again; and what then? If she had been faithful to the marriage covenant, it remained valid, and her union with another man would then be adulterous. And moreover a woman so treated was inevitably driven to a life of shame. Thrown upon the world, what could she do but seek another home? But she was then liable to similar treatment, all the more that she had been cheapened by her previous experience; and thus, like the woman of Samaria (cf. Jo. iv. 17, 18), she might pass from husband to husband till at length hard necessity reduced her to infamy. (2) "Whosoever shall marry her"—not "that is divorced" but—"after she hath been put away, committeth adultery." It is plainly the same case that is here in question —that of a woman who has been divorced though faithful to her marriage vow; and the argument is that, inasmuch as she has been wrongfully put away, her marriage remains valid, and therefore one who marries her commits adultery.

4. "THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD IN VAIN"

v. 33–37

33 *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:*

34 *But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven: for it is God's throne:*

35 *Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.*

36 *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

37 *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

A PECULIAR sanctity was of old attached to an oath by pagans and Jews alike (cf. Josh. ix. 19; Jud. xi. 35; Ps. xv. 4; Heb. vi. 16), and when seriously taken it was indeed a salutary restraint; but for the most part it degenerated into desecrating frivolity. "Forswear not thyself, break not an oath," said the ancient Law (cf. Ex. xx. 7; Lev. xix. 12; Num. xxx. 2; Dt. xxiii. 23): "Swear not at all, never take an oath," says our Lord, prohibiting the practice outright; and He alleges two reasons.

1. It bred a spirit of irreverence. For what were the oaths commonly employed by the Jews in those days? They swore, as the Talmud shows, "by Heaven," "by the earth," "by Jerusalem," forgetful in their glib asseveration how these are honoured in the Scriptures as "the throne, the footstool, the city of the Great King" (cf. Is. lxvi. 1; Ps. xlviii. 2). Another of their oaths was "by my head" or "by the life of my head." It was in truth an absurd oath; for what dominion has a

man over his head that he should thus put it in pledge? "Thou canst not make a single hair white or black" is our Lord's comment, recalling Martial's Latin epigram:

> You've dyed your hair, Lentinus, feigning yourself a youth:
> Yesterday white as a swan, black as a raven now.
> Everyone else you may trick; but Death—he knows the truth,
> And he'll twitch the mask away from your frosty pow.

What is here in view is that light use of oaths which so easily passes into "profane swearing," after the manner of gallants over their dice in Chaucer's day:

> By goddes precious herte, and by his nayles,
> And by the blode of Crist, that is in Hayles,
> Seven is my chaunce, and thine is cink and treye;
> By goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye,
> This dagger shal thurgh-out thin herte go.

And the habit persisted long after Chaucer's day even in fashionable and cultured society. Dr. Samuel Johnson observed of Colley Cibber, the Poet Laureate (1730–57), that "one half of what he said was oaths." And later still says Thackeray in *The Four Georges*: "I met lately a very old German gentleman, who had served in our army at the beginning of the century. Since then he has lived on his own estate, but rarely meeting with an Englishman, whose language—the language of fifty years ago that is—he possesses perfectly. When this highly bred old man began to speak English to me, almost every other word he uttered was an oath: as they used (they swore dreadfully in Flanders) with the Duke of York before Valenciennes, or at Carlton House over the supper and cards." It was worse than a coarse fashion, offensive to the instincts of refinement: it was a desecration of those awful sanctities which should never be mentioned save with reverence and godly fear. Therefore, says our Lord, "swear not at all."

2. Even a solemn oath in corroboration of the truth of an affirmation so far from serving that end is rather, as moralists have recognised, inimical to veracity, being "apt," says Charles Lamb in his essay on Imperfect Sympathies, "to introduce into the laxer sort of minds the notion of two kinds of truth

—the one applicable to the solemn affairs of justice, and the other to the common proceedings of daily intercourse. As truth bound upon the conscience by an oath can be but truth, so in the common affirmations of the shop and the market-place a latitude is expected and concealed upon questions wanting this solemn covenant. Something less than truth satisfies. It is common to hear a person say, 'You do not expect me to speak as if I were upon my oath.'" It is a maxim as old as Solon that "a gentleman's word is as sure as his oath"; and to put him on his oath is an insult to an honourable man. "Let your word," says our Lord, "be 'Yea, yea,' 'Nay, nay'"—a frank and simple affirmation or denial. "Whatsoever is more than these is of the Evil One" (R.V.). There is a sense of honour in every generous breast, and an appeal thereto is more compelling than an adjuration. "In the higher forms," wrote an old Rugby boy, telling the secret of the great master's moral sway, "any attempt at further proof of an assertion was immediately checked:—'If you say so, that is quite enough —*of course* I believe your word'; and there grew up in consequence a general feeling that 'it was a shame to tell Arnold a lie—he always believes one.'" "There are natures in which, if they love us, we are conscious of having a sort of baptism and consecration; they bind us over to rectitude and purity by their pure belief about us; and our sins become that worst kind of sacrilege which tears down the invisible altar of trust."

5. "*MEASURE FOR MEASURE*"

v. 38–42

38 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth :*

39 *But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil : but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

40 *And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.*

41 *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

42 *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

HERE, as we have seen, the Evangelist introduces a passage from the Ordination Address to the Twelve (cf. Lk. vi. 27–36), weaving it into "The Sermon on the Mount" by editorially introducing the formula "Ye have heard that it was said" and thus making it serve as a further exemplification of our Lord's attitude to the Law. It is important to observe this in reading His injunctions of meek submission to insult and injury, since it thus appears that these are not general requirements of Christian ethic but counsels to His Apostles and their successors in every age regarding the prosecution of their evangelic mission. The principle is that a trust imposes limitations ; and the higher the trust, the more severe its limitations ; and even as it is required of an officer of the Crown that he eschew political partisanship, so must a minister of the Gospel, in the interest of his sacred charge, curb his personal liberty and endure much which he would else be entitled to resist and redress. "The Lord's servant," says the Apostle (2 Tim. ii. 24), "must not strive, but be gentle towards all" ; and this is the obligation which our Lord here inculcates on the Twelve in "sending them forth to preach."

"Measure for measure" was the ancient rule (cf. Ex. xxi. 23–25; Lev. xxiv. 19, 20; Dt. xix. 21)—the *lex talionis* or "law of retaliation," as the Latin jurists termed it: "Resist not evil" or rather "him that is evil," "the evil man," is our Lord's rule; and He proceeds to exemplify it.

1. "Giving one's cheek to the smiter" was a Hebrew proverb for meek submission (cf. Is. l. 6; Lam. iii. 30). The left cheek would naturally receive the first buffet, but since the right was the more honourable (cf. vers. 29, 30), the specification of the right cheek here heightens the idea of contumely. The hurt was indeed trifling, but the insult was extreme (cf. 1 Ki. xxii. 24; Mt. xxvi. 67; Ac. xxiii. 2; 1 Cor. iv. 11; 2 Cor. xi. 20). "Even a slave," says Seneca, "would rather be scourged than buffeted." Hence "turning the other cheek" was the farthest reach of meek endurance. In proverbial phraseology there is always a touch of humour, and it would be foolish to take our Lord literally here. When He was thus entreated in the course of His examination before Annas (cf. Jo. xviii. 22, 23), He did not actually turn the other cheek but quietly remonstrated; and His meaning here, as the disciples would very well perceive, was that, when subjected to coarse contumely, they should bear themselves with that gentle dignity which ever befits a Christian minister. "Having," says Frederic Myers, "no interests to seek but some to renounce; finding his wages mainly in his work; denying himself for the sake of others, and desiring not to be ministered unto but to minister; superior to his brethren only because more like his Lord, and honourable only in virtue of his humbleness—such is a Christian minister." Peculiarly befitting a Christian minister, what else is this than the attitude of common self-respect? Laurence Sterne counsels us that "there is never anything to be got in wrestling with a chimney-sweeper"; and it is a shrewd observation of Amiel that "there is nothing more characteristic of a man than his behaviour toward fools." It is inevitable, as the world goes, that one should encounter rudeness, but if he value his peace of mind and his good name, he will quietly endure it and let it pass. No gentleman ever engages in a quarrel, rendering himself ridiculous and making sport for the Philistines. That is

a profitable story which is told of Socrates—how once his termagant spouse set upon him in presence of a company of his friends, and they bade him take his hands to her. "Yes," said he, "that, while she and I are at fisticuffs, you may cry 'Bravo, Socrates!' 'Bravo, Xanthippe!'"

2. Already our Lord has warned us against litigation (cf. vers. 25, 26), and here He repeats the admonition. "Submit," He says, "to any extortion rather than enter the graceless arena." Jewish law empowered a creditor to seize his debtor's raiment (cf. Pr. xx. 16). He might take the unfortunate's "coat" or "tunic," the short-sleeved, close-fitting vest reaching down to the knees, and retain it pending a settlement; but if he seized his "cloke," the loose mantle which served a poor man as his blanket, he must restore it by nightfall (cf. Ex. xxii. 26, 27; Dt. xxiv. 10–13; Am. ii. 8). "Forgo even this right," says our Lord, humorously inculcating disdain of ignoble strife. And indeed, if it be practised in His spirit, there is no surer way of disarming aggression and putting insolence to shame; but the folly of taking Him literally and practising it as a politic manœuvre is illustrated by an experience of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury in the eleventh century. While still a layman and master of a school at Avranches in Normandy, he was making a journey to Rouen and in passing through a forest was attacked by robbers and plundered of his money. This evangelic precept came into his mind and with it a story which he had heard of a pious traveller who, being robbed of his horse, told the highwaymen that it was an unruly beast and they had better take his whip too. Relishing the pleasantry they restored his horse and bade him go in peace. Here, thought Lanfranc, was a hopeful expedient, and he told his plunderers that, since they had his money, they had better have his clothes too. Alas! they fancied he was making a jest of them, and they stripped him and bound him to a tree and left him there.

3. The Greek word for "compel" signified rather "impress" (R.V. marg.) or "commandeer." It was originally a Persian word, denoting the Persian system of posting by relays of mounted couriers (cf. Esth. viii. 10). The system was adopted

by the Greeks when they succeeded to the Persian dominion of the East, and then by the Romans, who transformed it into a military service. Just as of old civilians and their beasts in cases of emergency had been commandeered in the King's name to carry forward the despatches, so were they all over the Empire in our Lord's day to transport the baggage of troops on the march. An impressive example is furnished by the only other instance where the word occurs in the New Testament —the impressment of Simon of Cyrene to carry our Lord's cross to Calvary (cf. Mt. xxvii. 32 ; Mk. xv. 21). The practice was bitterly resented, and our Lord's counsel here is aptly pointed by the Stoic Epictetus' handling of the grievance. " If," says the latter, " there be an impressment, and a soldier seize your ass, let him have his way : don't resist, don't even grumble. Else you'll get blows and none the less lose your ass as well." " Submit to the inevitable ; grin and bear it " is the philosopher's counsel. And what is our Lord's counsel ? " Make a virtue of necessity," He says ; " whosoever will impress you for one mile, go with him twain." Treat the exaction as an appeal for help, and render it with blithe goodwill. Take up the burden and carry it twice the distance. Thus the situation will be transformed : you will be no reluctant victim but a kindly benefactor.

> The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief ;
> He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.

4. Our Lord is here addressing primarily the Twelve whom He presently sent forth on their mission with no money in their purses (cf. x. 9), dependent for food and lodging on the generosity of their converts (cf. Lk. x. 7) ; and thus His requirement in their case was that, schooled by experience, they should sympathise with others, never turning a deaf ear to the cry of distress but sharing what little they had and freely lavishing better gifts than silver or gold (cf. Ac. iv. 6). And even in the case of those who had no lack of worldly goods, His precept was plainly conditional. As St. Augustine remarks, He says " Give to him that asketh thee," not " Give whatever he may ask " ; and presently (cf. ver. 45) He exhibits as our Exemplar

the Heavenly Father who, while He always answers prayer, answers it in His own way, often when we beg what is harmful denying it for our good and thus truly giving by withholding. Again, He does not say " Lend to everyone who would borrow " but " From him who would borrow turn not away," that is, " Do not spurn him but listen kindly to his story and consider it."

It is thus not indiscriminate charity that He inculcates here, and His precept has two obvious and most necessary limitations. One is that, since " charity begins at home," we must first of all discharge our personal obligations (cf. 1 Tim. v. 8). Then, and only then, are we at liberty to extend the scope of our benevolence. We may indeed pinch ourselves for others, but we have no right, in the name of charity, to impoverish our dependants or leave our lawful debts unpaid. " His heart," said Macaulay of Oliver Goldsmith, " was soft even to weakness : he was so generous that he quite forgot to be just ; he forgave injuries so readily that he might be said to invite them ; and was so liberal to beggars that he had nothing left for his tailor and his butcher." Furthermore, injudicious philanthropy demoralises its recipients. It is told of William Law, the saintly Nonjuror of the eighteenth century, author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,* the book which first set Samuel Johnson " thinking in earnest about religion," that in his later days he acted as almoner and instructor to two pious ladies who devoted their lives to religion and their ample fortunes to charity at his native place, Kingscliffe in Northamptonshire. On their behalf he dispensed £2,500 annually, and the consequence was that the neighbourhood was speedily demoralised. There is nothing more ruinous alike to the giver, to the recipient, and to the entire community than facile and indiscriminate beneficence. It is in truth a prostitution of charity, as Socrates remarked to a reckless philanthropist like Timon of Athens. " Fie upon you ! " said he. " The Graces are virgins, and you have made them harlots." " Blessed," says the Psalmist, " is he that "—not merely " giveth to " but—" considereth the poor " or, as the Scottish metrical version has it, " he that wisely doth the poor man's case consider." Charity is not

merely helping one's neighbours but helping them to help themselves. It was the dole (*sportula*) that transformed the once brave and self-reliant populace of imperial Rome into a horde of idle, greedy, discontented paupers, thus precipitating her decline and fall.

6. "*THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR*"

v. 43–48

43 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

44 *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

45 *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

46 *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*

47 *And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*

48 *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

IT is written in the Law (cf. Lev. xix. 18) "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," but nowhere is it written "Thou shalt hate thine enemy"; indeed the doing of good offices to an enemy is expressly enjoined (cf. Ex. xxiii. 4, 5). If it thus seem as though less than our Lord's accustomed fairness were here shown to the ancient Law, it should be considered (1) that this verse was not spoken by Him. It is an editorial addition of the Evangelist, fitting a passage of the Ordination Address into "the Sermon on the Mount" and adapting it to serve as a further example of our Lord's enlargement of the ancient Law. And (2) the injustice is rather apparent than real. For, though not a precept of the Law, "Thou shalt hate thine enemy" was a Jewish doctrine. In the very passage here quoted "thy neighbour" is correlated with "the children of thy people"; and hence it was concluded that the duty

extended only to fellow Jews, and all others were accounted hateful and unclean. "Refuse to show benevolence or mercy to Gentiles" was a Rabbinical precept; and it was zealously practised. St. Paul testified (cf. 1 Th. ii. 15) of his compatriots that they were "contrary to all men"; and they proved it wherever they settled abroad. "Their obstinate fidelity among themselves," according to the Latin historian, was matched by "hostile hatred toward all others." They would not, says the satirist, show an uncircumcised traveller the road or guide him to a fountain.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy" was thus indeed the Jewish practice, and what is our Lord's precept? Our text is here assimilated to St. Luke's (cf. vi. 27, 28), and the best authorities give simply, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." A large requirement truly; and, lest it seem impossible, it is well not merely to observe that He fully practised it Himself (cf. Lk. xxiii. 34) and is here inviting us to follow in His steps, but to consider what His requirement actually is. There are two Greek words indiscriminately rendered "love" in our Version. One, the more tender, is employed, for example, of a son's love for his father or mother (cf. Mt. x. 37), of the Eternal Father's love for the Eternal Son (cf. Jo. v. 20), and again of our Lord's love for His "dear friend" Lazarus: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest—he who is so dear to Thee—is sick"; "Behold how He loved him—how dear he was to Him!" (Jo. xi. 3, 11, 36). The other, less tender, approximating to "regard" or "esteem," is the word employed wherever it is written that "God loves the world" (cf. Jo. iii. 16). It is the word which our Lord employs here; and both words occur in significant contrast in the Greek historian's report of Mark Antony's oration over the body of Cæsar, where he says to the Roman populace: "You *held him dear* as a father, and you *esteemed him* as a benefactor." Hence it appears what our Lord's requirement here is. It is not that we should love our enemies as we love our friends, but rather that so far from hating them and requiting them with ill for ill we should treat them as though they were our benefactors, requiting with

good the evil which they do us. So He defines it when with "love your enemies" He couples "pray for your persecutors." For what does it mean when we pray for others? Not merely that we sincerely desire their welfare but that we take counsel with God and vow to co-operate with Him in bringing it to pass. And thus, says Bishop Martensen, "the sure token that we love our enemies is this—that we can pray for them from the heart."

A moving example of the duty which our Lord here enjoins is the behaviour of "the auld blind widow" in *Old Mortality* toward the fugitive from the field of Drumclog. "He stopped at this puir cottage, stiff and bloody with wounds, pale and dune out wi' riding, and his horse sae weary he couldna drag ae foot after the other, and his foes were close ahint him, and he was ane o' our enemies. What could I do? . . . I fed him, and relieved him, and keepit him hidden till the pursuit was ower. . . . I gat ill-will about it amang some o' our ain folk. They said I should hae been to him what Jael was to Sisera. But weel I wot I had nae divine command to shed blood, and to save it was baith like a woman and a Christian. And then they said I wanted natural affection, to relieve ane that belanged to the band that murdered my twa sons. . . . The tane fell wi' sword in hand, fighting for a broken National Covenant; the tother—O, they took him and shot him dead on the green before his mother's face! My auld een dazzled when the shots were looten off, and, to my thought, they waxed weaker and weaker ever since that weary day; and sorrow, and heartbreak, and tears that would not be dried might help on the disorder." That is "loving one's enemies"; and what more need be said?

It is a difficult achievement, and our Lord sets before us a high incentive—the example of God, who lavishes His sunshine and rain with impartial benediction, not because He is regardless of moral distinctions but because He is the Heavenly Father, and His fatherly heart is patient toward His undeserving children, seeking ever to win them by kindness. And if we would be His sons indeed, we must be like Him, sharing His solicitude for our erring brethren and co-operating with His

gracious design. He claims it of us. He expects of His sons a peculiar generosity. "What do ye more than others? Ye therefore shall be perfect (R.V.; cf. Dt. xviii. 13; Lev. xix. 2), as your Heavenly Father is perfect." It is like Nelson's signal at Trafalgar: "England expects every man to do his duty." *Noblesse oblige.* Princes must be princely, "each one resembling the children of a king."

CENSURE OF PHARISAISM

vi. 1–18

1 *Take heed that ye do not your *alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward †of your Father which is in heaven.*

2 *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, ‡do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

3 *But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:*

4 *That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

5 *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

6 *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

7 *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

8 *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

9 *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

10 *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

11 *Give us this day our daily bread.*

12 *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

* Or, *righteousness.* † Or, *with.* ‡ Or, *cause not a trumpet to be sounded.*

13 *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

14 *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:*

15 *But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

16 *Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

17 *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;*

18 *That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

HERE the Evangelist introduces another passage of our Lord's first sermon in the synagogue of Capernaum. It is a scathing censure of the religious spirit of His day as exemplified by the Pharisees. And who were the Pharisees? In later Judaism they were, alike for good and for evil, very much what the Puritans were in old England. The rivals of the Sadducees, the party which always sided with the ruling power and was rewarded under the Roman domination with a monopoly of the lucrative offices of the priesthood, they were the popular party which stood faithful to the national traditions and comprehended all the patriotism and most of the piety in the Jewish life and thought of that period. They were the guardians and interpreters of the Sacred Law, and religion was, with them, a quest after righteousness. The question was "What makes a man righteous before God?" And their answer was "The keeping of the Law"; which meant, on their view, observance of its ceremonial ordinances—circumcision, fasting, ablution, Sabbatarianism, and the like. Hence it came to pass that, though the nobler sort realised the need of inward purity and fellowship with God, they were mostly hollow formalists, and our Lord was wont to designate them "hypocrites." This is indeed in its modern use an ugly word, and it may seem

alien from our Lord's manner. For He was never abusive even when most severe. He was always a gentleman, and His language was always deliberate and well chosen. On His lips, however, "hypocrite" was no contumelious epithet. In the original the word signified properly "an actor," and His application of it to the Pharisees was a just and precise characterisation. For they were in truth nothing else than "play-actors," posturing as on the stage of a theatre in a guise of sanctity to win the spectators' applause.

His criticism of the Pharisaic spirit was addressed to the congregation in the synagogue of Capernaum, but it was at the same time an open and courageous indictment of that proud and powerful order; for the Rulers of the Synagogue were Pharisees, and they were ranged before Him in the chief seats (cf. xxiii. 6), scrutinising Him jealously and marking every word He spoke. It was dangerous, as the event proved, to provoke their animosity.

> Their religion with blood they freely spiced,
> They kept the Sabbath and crucified Christ,
> For teaching God's Sabbath could never be
> The Sabbath that suited the Pharisee.

Yet He stoutly confronted them like a prophet of old; like the Scottish Reformer who "never feared the face of man," "speaking the truth, impugn it whoso listed." He began with a general prohibition of play-acting in religion: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness (R.V.) before men to be seen of them" or rather "to be a spectacle unto them"; and then He proceeded to adduce particular instances.

1. *Play-acting in Almsgiving* (vers. 2–4). There is no "work of righteousness" more largely inculcated in the Holy Scriptures (cf. Lev. xix. 9, 10; Dt. xv. 7–11; Ps. xli. 1; Pr. xxi. 13), and none that was accounted more meritorious by the later Jews, insomuch that "righteousness" and "alms" were frequently synonymous, as though almsgiving were the whole of religion (cf. 2 Cor. ix. 9); whence it is that many manuscripts have "alms" for "righteousness" in ver. 1. Here "the play-actors" had a congenial opportunity; and our Lord

pictures them in proverbial phrase as "sounding a trumpet before them" or, as the Greeks put it, "playing their own flutes"—ostentatiously depositing their gifts in the alms-box of the synagogue or in the outstretched hand of a beggar in the street. The worst offence of this spirit is its cruelty. In the language of the New Testament (cf. Rom. xii. 13 R.V.; 2 Cor. viii. 4; Gal. vi. 6) almsgiving is "communication" or rather "communion," "fellowship." "To do good," it is written (Heb. xiii. 16), "and to communicate forget not," literally "of beneficence and fellowship be not forgetful." Both are needed. Mere beneficence is not charity. Grudgingly yielded, said a wise Roman, a benefit is "stony bread"; and ostentatiously conferred it is an insult, humiliating the recipient for the giver's glorification. This was the manner of the Pharisees. They gave, in the ancient phrase, "with both hands"—with large ostentation. "When thou doest alms," says our Lord, "let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 'do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.'"

2. *Play-acting in Prayer* (vers. 5–15). Even in their approaches to God the Pharisees courted applause. "They loved to stand" or more truly "take their stand, strike an attitude, and pray." And this not merely in the synagogues; for they were credited with timing themselves to be abroad at street-corners and other places of concourse at the hours of prayer, that they might perform their elaborate genuflexions in the public view, all "that they might be seen of men" or rather "be a sight to men." It is indeed right that we should openly acknowledge God by public devotion; and our Lord recognises this when He says first, according to the best authorities (ver. 5), "when *ye* pray." But the well-spring of all devotion is personal communion with God, and this He now inculcates: "*Thou*, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet." The word here rendered "closet" means properly "treasury," the room where a man stored his treasure, and so "storehouse," (cf. Lk. xii. 24), and hence generally "a secret chamber" (cf. Lk. xii. 3). Seek such a retreat, says our Lord, and there, alone with God, unseen by human eyes, unheard by human ears, pour out your heart before Him. It might seem an

impossible requirement to many of His hearers, fisherfolk and peasants as they were, dwelling in humble abodes; but His own example showed them the way. There was no privacy in His narrow lodging at Capernaum, no inner chamber whither He might retire and shut the door; and what was He wont to do when He would pray to His Father in secret? He would rise early and steal out to the uplands and find solitude there (cf. Mk. i. 35; Mt. xiv. 23; Lk. vi. 12). A soul that desires communion will find opportunity. "Remember your tears and prayers to God," writes Bunyan in his preface to *Grace Abounding*; "yea, how you sighed under every hedge for mercy. Have you never a hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the close, the milk-house, the barn, and the like, where God did visit your soul?"

It was a Rabbinical saying that "whosoever multiplies prayer is heard"; and the Pharisees delighted in long prayers (cf. Mk. xii. 40). Already another Jesus, the Son of Sirach, had written in that most beautiful of the Jewish Apocrypha, the Book of Ecclesiasticus (vii. 14), "Repeat not thy words in thy prayer"; and here our Lord renews the admonition and condemns the fashion as at once senseless and heathenish. "Use not vain repetitions," He says, or, as it is in the original, "Do not *battalogise*"; and what does this odd word mean? It was popularly explained as meaning "talk like Battus," whether the Lacedæmonian adventurer who founded the Libyan city of Cyrene in the eighth century B.C. and who, because he stammered in his speech, was known as Battus, "the Stammerer," or a foolish poet who was so nicknamed because he delighted in pompous iterations and inversions. Whatever its precise origin, the word was much like our "babble" or "gabble" with an added touch of humour which would catch the fancy of our Lord's hearers. "When ye pray, do not babble, do not gabble, like the heathen"; like those frenzied priests, for example, who "called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us" (1 Ki. xviii. 26). "They fancied that 'in the multitude of their words' (cf. Pr. x. 19) they would be listened to."

"Be not," says our Lord, "like unto them"; and here

it may seem as though His argument proved too much. For if God be our Father, kind and wise, why should we pray at all, and not rather fearlessly trust His gracious providence and accept whatever His will may appoint? But indeed this is the very essence of true prayer. It is neither entreaty as though God did not care, nor telling Him our need as though He did not know. It is the surrender of our wills to His and the submission of our lives to His disposal after the example of our Blessed Lord in Gethsemane (cf. Mt. xxvi. 39). "Thy will be done" is the sum of all true prayer; and it wins an abundant answer. For when we say it from the heart, it calms and braces us, and we are not only braver to encounter adversity but fitter to do our appointed task and carry it to a successful issue.

> The dear God hears and pities all:
> He knoweth all our wants;
> And what we blindly ask of Him
> His love withholds or grants.
>
> And so I sometimes think our prayers
> Might well be merged in one;
> And nest and perch and hearth and church
> Repeat, "Thy will be done."

Consider our relation to the natural order. Its laws are fixed and immutable, and they pursue their relentless course unmoved by entreaties. They crush the man who resists them, yet to the man who aligns himself with them they are kind and beneficent. The wind which would drive an unskilful mariner on the rocks despite his cries, is the ally of one who knows how to lay his course and trim his sails.

> Chance will not do the work. Chance sends the breeze;
> But if the pilot slumber at the helm,
> The very wind that wafts us towards the port
> May dash us on the shelves. The seaman's part is vigilance,
> Blow it or rough or smooth.

And Nature's laws are God's ordinances, nothing else than, in Dr. James Martineau's phrase, "His personal habits." And this is prayer—putting oneself in line with the will of God. Its

use is neither to acquaint Him with our needs nor to win His favour: these are heathenish notions. True prayer is an act of self-surrender, the submission of our wills to His. It is our removal of the obstacles which would hinder the operation of His gracious purpose and restrain the blessings which He is ready to bestow upon us.

Here the Evangelist introduces the prayer which at their request our Lord taught the Twelve early in the second year of His ministry (cf. Lk. xi. 1–4); and it is indeed a most fitting exemplar of His admonition. Unlike the prayers of the heathen and the Pharisees, it is simple and brief and—save in one instance, whereof more anon—it has to do with spiritual concerns —God's glory, the advancement of His Kingdom, forgiveness, the avoidance and overcoming of temptation. The keynote is struck in the address "Our Father." It is indeed no novel appellation, since the Jews called God "the Father"; but on our Lord's lips the thought was essentially different, since in the Old Testament Scriptures, as we have seen (cf. exposition of iii. 17), God is the Father merely of the nation or of the king as her head and representative. When the Psalmist conceives Him as "pitying them that fear Him like as a father pitieth his children" (Ps. ciii. 13), it is only fatherliness and not fatherhood that is ascribed to Him; but according to our Lord He is our Father—the Heavenly Father in whom the ideal of human fatherhood is realised. And hence it follows that we are all brethren and owe each other a debt of love and service. See how He teaches this lesson here. Both these liturgical phrases were in use among the Jews—*Abba* (cf. Mk. xiv. 36; Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 16), "O Father," and *Abinu*, "Our Father"; and what is the difference? The former was employed by a believer of old in his personal approach to God, whereas in the latter he associated himself with the commonwealth of Israel; and thus, when our Lord bids us pray "Our Father," He would have us realise our fellowship with a still wider community—the human brotherhood.

Our Father's honour and the advancement of His Kingdom are our supreme concerns, and it is for these that our Lord bids us pray first. Nor indeed are they forgotten when we pray

further for forgiveness and deliverance from temptation. For whatever wrong we do to others is a violation of His Kingdom's law of brotherhood, and therefore it is still for His honour that we seek both forgiveness of the wrong we have done and deliverance from further wrong. Observe how we are taught to pray for the latter: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" or rather "the Evil One." Though, as we have seen, temptation is not sin but an opportunity for moral and spiritual discipline, it is always a perilous ordeal; and, realising our weakness, it becomes us to avoid it where we may, facing it when we must in reliance on heavenly grace but never courting it, after the manner of that pious lady in the city of Alexandria who, having nothing to cross or fret her in her pleasant home, begged St. Athanasius to provide as her companion the most peevish of the widows who were maintained by the Church's bounty, that by daily intercourse with her she might be exercised in forbearance and charity. "I know not," observes Jeremy Taylor, "how well the counsel succeeded with her; I am sure it was not very safe: and to invite the trouble, to triumph over it, is to wage a war of an uncertain issue, for no end but to get the pleasures of the victory, which oftentimes do not pay for the trouble, never for the danger." It is "tempting God" contrary to our Lord's example in the wilderness (cf. iv. 7). And therefore He bids us pray: "Lead us not into temptation: if it please Thee, spare us the ordeal; but if it be Thy will that we encounter it, carry us by Thy grace triumphantly through it."

Now what of the petition "Give us this day our daily bread"? It is the only petition which has to do with material concerns; and the difficulty is that it seems to conflict with our Lord's injunction a little later (cf. vers. 31–33) that we should never fret about what we shall eat or drink. Hence it has been inferred that the petition is not for "the meat which perisheth" but for "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (cf. Jo. vi. 27). And so St. Augustine took it of the sacramental bread and found here an inculcation of daily communion. But in thus interpreting the petition he had before him the Latin Version which our translators also follow; and in the

original Greek the phrase signifies not "our daily bread" but "our bread for the coming day" (cf. R.V. marg.). And is there not here a fresh perplexity, inasmuch as our Lord presently (cf. ver. 34) bids us "take no anxious thought for the morrow"? All the difficulty vanishes when we remember our Lord's custom —how, when He would hold communion with the Father, He would rise "a great while before day" and go forth to "a solitary place"—usually, while He sojourned at Capernaum, the upland behind the town—and there pray. He was thus employed when His disciples craved a lesson in the art which He so constantly practised and received this precious exemplar (cf. Lk. xi. 1). They had followed Him to His hillside oratory and witnessed His long devotion, and now, "when He ceased," the day was breaking. And so the prayer which He taught them is a morning prayer; and, understanding this, we recognise the significance of the petition "Give us our bread for the coming" or more precisely "the on-coming day." How suitable it was on the lips of the Twelve! At His call they had left their boats and nets and every means of livelihood to share His homeless wanderings; and they seldom knew when they awoke in the morning what they would eat or drink that day or where at its close they would lay down their heads. But their Father knew what things they had need of, and it sufficed them to commit themselves to His gracious providence and face "the on-coming day" with trustful hearts, unfretting and unafraid. And truly in this mortal state, resembling at the best

> The uncertain glory of an April day,
> Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
> And by and by a cloud takes all away,

who is so surely provided that he has no occasion for this petition? Health may fail (cf. Dt. viii. 18), schemes miscarry, and "riches make themselves wings and fly away." There were both prudence and piety in Robert Burns's grace at the Earl of Selkirk's table:

> Some hae meat that canna eat,
> And some could eat that want it;
> But we hae meat, and we can eat,—
> Sae let the Lord be thankit.

It is remarkable that our Lord thought fit to enlarge on none of the petitions of the prayer save one—"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive" or rather—since the rule is "First forgive, and then you will be forgiven" (cf. v. 23, 24)—"as we also have forgiven our debtors." And what is the purport of His comment thereon (vers. 14, 15)? It is not merely a reaffirmation of the principle that only the forgiving are forgiven but a definition thereof. And truly His definition is most needful, and if we disregard it, then His requirement will surely seem too hard for us. So it seemed to those Christians at Antioch in St. Chrysostom's day who at the repetition of the prayer in public worship kept silence on reaching this petition; and it was an honest instinct that refrained their lips—the instinct which prompted the indignant protestation which Thackeray puts on his hero's lips: "There are some injuries which no honest man should forgive, and I shall be a rogue on the day I shake hands with that villain." What then are we to make of our Lord's requirement? Observe what it actually is. It is that our forgiveness of our fellow men should be commensurate with the forgiveness which we crave from God. And is there no limitation of His forgiveness? It is the testimony of Holy Scripture that, though even toward the impenitent He is a forgiving God, ever seeking to reach their hearts and leaving no device untried to win them, there is no actual forgiveness where there is no repentance (cf. 1 Jo. i. 9). And this, neither less nor more, is our Lord's requirement of His disciples; and we are fulfilling it if we would fain bring those who have wronged us to a better frame, and would joyfully welcome their overtures of peace and "shake hands" with the worst of villains who repented of his villainy. We are then forgiving our debtors as we pray God to forgive us our debts.

> All is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
> Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
> Forgives.

Even so it is a difficult achievement; and the service which our Lord has done us is that He has not merely reaffirmed

the hard duty which the ancient Scriptures and the Rabbis had already inculcated, but has set before us a high and compelling incentive by revealing in His Cross the largeness and freeness of God's forgiveness.

> Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once;
> And He that might the vantage best have took
> Found out the remedy. How would you be,
> If He, which is the top of judgement, should
> But judge you as you are? O, think on that;
> And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
> Like man new made.

"Fix your eyes on your Crucified Lord," says Santa Teresa, "and everything will seem easy to you." Observe, however, that as yet this sovereign incentive was hidden from the Twelve; and here lies the reason why, when our Lord gave them this precious prayer, He left it incomplete. As it stands in our Version indeed, it closes with a doxology, but this is lacking in the oldest and best manuscripts. It is no part of the prayer as our Lord gave it, but a liturgical formula, adapting the prayer for use in public worship. And even so the prayer remains incomplete; for it lacks that supreme argument, that all-prevailing plea, "in the name of Jesus Christ," "through Him," "for His sake." While He was with them, it was impossible for the disciples to pray thus, pleading the merit of His Atoning Sacrifice and resting on His finished work; and He marked the difference when on the night of His betrayal He said to the Eleven (Jo. xvi. 23, 24 R.V.): "If ye shall ask any thing of the Father, He will give it you in My name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled."

3. *Play-acting in Fasting* (vers. 16–18). Fasting was not a stated ordinance of the Jewish religion. Public fasts were appointed whenever any public calamity—war, pestilence, drought, famine, and the like—called for humiliation before God; and devout folk fasted privately as they felt the need of spiritual discipline. This, however, was insufficient for the extremer sort of Pharisees. They fasted regularly twice a week (cf. Lk. xviii. 12), each Monday and Thursday; and since

these were the week-days when the congregation assembled in the synagogue (cf. iv. 23–25), " the play-actors " had the more effective opportunity for public display. After the fashion which the prophet had satirised of old (cf. Is. lviii. 5), they went bare-foot, their faces unwashed and their bodies unbathed, their heads besprinkled with ashes instead of the cool ointment so comforting in the sultry East, and their faces woe-begone. It was all a heartless masquerade. " They make their faces unsightly," says our Lord with a caustic word-play which our English Version misses, " that they may be a sight to men in their fasting." It was all self-glorification ; nor was this the sum of their offence. Even if our sorrows be real, it is cruel to parade them before our fellows who all have sorrows of their own enough and to spare. If fast we must, we should fast in secret, confessing our sins to God and telling Him our griefs, and then by His grace meeting the world " with morning faces and with morning hearts " and words of kindly cheer.

> Go, bury thy sorrow : the world hath its share ;
> Go, bury it deeply ; go, hide it with care.
> Go, think of it calmly when curtained by night;
> Go, tell it to Jesus, and all will be right.

WORLDLY CARE

vi. 19–34

19 *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :*

20 *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal :*

21 *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

22 *The light of the body is the eye : if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

23 *But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !*

24 *No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

25 *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?*

26 *Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?*

27 *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ?*

28 *And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin :*

29 *And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

30 *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

31 *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

32 *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

34 *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

A PASSAGE from our Lord's discourse on Worldly-mindedness (cf. Lk. xii. 13–34). The occasion was an appeal addressed to Him, while He was preaching to the multitude, that He should interpose in a dispute between two brothers regarding their patrimony. He answered it with the parable of the Rich Fool, and then, after His wont (cf. Mk. iv. 34), when He was alone with them, He expounded it to His disciples. "So," the parable had concluded, "is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God"; and now He resumes the moral, making it the starting-point of His private admonition: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."

Observe that it is not worldly wealth that our Lord here censures. This He never condemned. On the contrary, He represented it as a sacred trust and commended the good and faithful servant who diligently improved it (cf. xxv. 14–30). And His own earthly experience shows how precious an opportunity it affords; for did He not owe His daily bread to the kindness of prosperous disciples who "ministered unto Him of their substance" (cf. Lk. viii. 3)? It is a Christian duty to be "diligent in business" that not only may we "owe no man anything" but be able to succour others in their need.

To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justifi'd by honour;

Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train-attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof"; and He needs faithful stewards for the administration and improvement of its store.

There is a wide difference between "possessions" and "treasures"; and what our Lord censures here is "the laying up *for ourselves* of *treasures* upon earth," setting our hearts upon worldly possessions, prizing them as the highest good, and using them for selfish ends; and He proceeds to demonstrate the folly and wickedness thereof.

1. Earthly possessions are unenduring. Moths "consume" or rather "disfigure" (the same word which is so rendered in ver. 16) our purple and fine linen, and "rust" or rather "corrosion" (literally, "eating") our vessels of gold and silver; thieves "break (literally "dig") through" and plunder our store; and when we pass hence, we shall carry with us nothing of our earthly wealth, since, as a mediæval proverb has it grimly, "our last robe is made without pockets." Only the treasures of love are eternal, and if we be setting our hearts on aught else, we are dooming ourselves to swift disillusionment and eternal regret. Well said the prophet of Arabia: "A man's true wealth is the good he has done in this world to his fellow man. When he dies, people will ask, 'What property has he left behind him?' but the angels will ask, 'What good deeds has he sent before him?'"

2. Setting one's heart on earthly treasures obscures one's spiritual vision (vers. 22, 23). Our Lord's meaning here is hardly intelligible unless we recognise with St. Chrysostom and other Greek interpreters that, when He speaks of "a single eye" and "an evil eye," He is employing the technical phraseology of ancient ophthalmy. The eye was termed of old "the light of the body" and "the window of the soul," since the body is the chamber of the soul, and without a window the soul would sit in darkness. In medical phrase "a single eye" was a healthy eye; and the self-same idea is expressed

by modern physicians when for the converse phrase "an evil eye" they employ the term *diplopia* or "double sight." When the eyes are tired, they do not correlate, and then one "sees double": if he attempts to read, the page is all dim and blurred. And even so worldly affections, like cross lights, distract and distort one's view of life.

3. For a believer to set his heart on worldly treasures is to attempt an impossibility. Whatever engages one's devotion is one's master (cf. Rom. vi. 16), and it was an ancient proverb that "no man can serve two masters."

> Which is the side that I must go withal?
> I am with both: each army hath a hand;
> And in their rage, I having hold of both,
> They whirl asunder and dismember me.
> Whoever wins, on that side shall I lose;
> Assured loss before the match be play'd.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." *Mammon*, more correctly *mamon*, was, says St. Jerome, a Syriac word, diversely interpreted as what is "entrusted" to a man and what "supports" or "sustains" him. In any case it signified "riches" or "wealth," and it had no evil implication. Thus there was a Rabbinical saying "Thy neighbour's mamon shall be precious unto thee as thine own," and another "The salt of mamon is righteousness," that is, "almsgiving" (cf. vers. 2–4). Wealth honestly acquired is a good gift of God, but to set one's affection on it is to make it one's master; and a double allegiance is impossible. We may serve God or we may serve mamon, but we cannot "serve God *and* mamon." "It is," says William Law, "as possible for a man to worship a crocodile, and yet be a pious man, as to have his affections set upon this world, and yet be a good Christian."

And now see the argument which our Lord builds hereon. He is addressing His disciples. "Ye," He says, "are serving God: be whole-hearted in your allegiance and enjoy its blessedness. Ye cannot serve God *and* mamon. *Therefore* I say unto you, Take no thought—no anxious thought—for your worldly concerns." And what are the worldly concerns which we are

naturally prone to fret about? They are food and raiment, or, as our Lord has it, our life, our livelihood—what we shall eat and drink, and our bodies—what we shall put on, wherewithal we shall be clothed. And on these He proceeds to enlarge.

1. The unreasonableness of fretting about livelihood, the preservation of life. "Behold the fowls of the air—the wild birds" or, according to St. Luke (xii. 24), "consider the ravens: they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your Heavenly Father feedeth them." So had the Psalmist said of old (Ps. cxlvii. 9): "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." With good reason are the young ravens thus singled out in evidence of God's kindly providence. For they are, if report be true, peculiarly helpless creatures. "When the raven hath hatched her eggs," says Isaak Walton, "she takes no further care, but leaves her young ones to the care of the God of nature, who is said, in the Psalms, 'to feed the young ravens that call upon him.' And they be kept alive and fed by a dew; or worms that breed in their nests; or some other ways that we mortals know not." Moreover, the raven is an unclean bird.

'Tis written in the Book,
He heareth the young ravens when they cry;
And yet they cry for carrion.

Here then is our Lord's argument: God is your Heavenly Father; and if He feeds the wild birds, even the unclean ravens, with the food they crave, will He suffer you, His children, to lack?

It seems as though when He proceeds "Which of you by taking anxious thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" He passed abruptly from the question of livelihood; but it is not really so. For the Greek word for "stature" meant also "age," and this is its meaning here. And similarly—since eighteen inches would be a huge addition to one's stature and not, as St. Luke has it (xii. 26), "that which is least," "the merest trifle"—cubit is here employed as a measure not of space but of time. It was a common usage in ancient

literature. The Psalmist, for example, has (xxxix. 15) "Thou hast made my days as handbreadths." And so in Old English. Chaucer has "a forlong-wey," signifying a brief space of time, so much as it takes to walk a furlong; George Herbert "my inch of life"; Henry Vaughan "rests not a span"; and Richard Baxter "this hasty inch of time." So here our Lord's question is "Which of you by taking anxious thought can add a single cubit to the length of his days?" It is another argument against "taking anxious thought for one's life." How foolish, in Hazlitt's phrase, to "fret oneself to death with trying to be what one is not and to do what one cannot"! And how faithless, since it is all at our Heavenly Father's disposal!

2. The unreasonableness of fretting about the body—"taking anxious thought for raiment." "Consider," says our Lord, or rather "learn the lesson of the lilies of the field"—the wild flowers tended by no human hand yet, though they "neither toil nor spin," arrayed with a beauty which puts Solomon's glory (cf. 1 Ki. x. 4, 5) to shame. It is God who thus arrays the very grass which "in the morning flourisheth and groweth up and in the evening is cut down and withereth" (Ps. xc. 5, 6); and will He forget you, "O ye of little faith"?—a frequent phrase of our Lord, always with a tone of wonderment at our obliviousness of the love which encompasses us (cf. viii. 26, xiv. 31, xvi. 8).

Confide ye aye in Providence, for Providence is kind,
And bear ye a' life's changes wi' a calm and tranquil mind.
Tho' press'd and hemm'd on ev'ry side, ha'e faith and ye'll win through,
For ilka blade o' grass keps its ain drap o' dew.

"Therefore take no anxious thought" concludes our Lord with a threefold enforcement of His admonition. (1) Anxiety for worldly concerns is practical heathenism. It is natural that the Gentiles, "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12), should "seek after all these things."

How can they live, how will they die,
How bear the cross of grief,
Who have not got the light of faith,
The courage of belief?

But we who know the Heavenly Father and His lovingkindness —why should we fret or be afraid? (2) There is a surer way than fretting. "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things: seek ye first His Kingdom (R.V.) and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Among the numerous "unwritten sayings" of our Lord—sayings of His which, unrecorded by the Evangelists, have been preserved, with more or less credibility, in the voluminous literature of the early Church—we find this: "Ask the great things, and the little will be added unto you; ask the heavenly things, and the earthly will be added unto you." It may indeed be merely a traditional version of His saying in the text, yet it is a true interpretation thereof. It enunciates a principle which operates in every domain of human experience. What, for example, is the golden secret of success in worldly business? Think of the work, and the work will bring its reward. "Work for the joy of the working and not for money or fame," and these will come unsought. "Seek the great things, and the little will be added unto you." And of all great things the greatest is our Father's Kingdom. Seek that, and have no fear for food or raiment. God, says Richard Baxter, is "your safest purse-bearer," and "he that knoweth that he serveth a God that will never suffer any man to be a loser by Him, need not fear what hazard he runs in His cause." It may be little that He will appoint for our portion, but truly is it written (Ps. xxxvii. 16) that "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

> Ill that He blesses is our good,
> And unblest good is ill;
> And all is right that seems most wrong,
> If it be His sweet will!

(3) Foreboded ill, even when real, is like that apparition which startled Wordsworth as he "trod the trackless hills by mists bewildered." It was only a shepherd with his flock, but the poet saw him

> distant a few steps;
> In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
> His sheep like Greenland bears.

Anticipation is ever worse than the reality, as "the hare"—so say the lovers of the chase—"feels more agony during the pursuit of the greyhounds than when she is struggling in their fangs." And oftentimes the troubles which we anticipate are purely imaginary. The morrow comes, and it brings calm where we looked for storm. Wherefore then embitter the present by foreboding ills which may never arise, and which, if they come, will surely be other than we expect? Whatever ills the morrow may bring, it will bring also the needful grace.

HARSH JUDGMENT

vii. 1–6

1 *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

2 *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

3 *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

4 *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

5 *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

6 *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*

ANOTHER passage from the Ordination Address (cf. Lk. vi. 37–42). When our Lord says "Judge not, that ye be not judged," it is not primarily God's judgment that He means but the condemnation which, by our judgment of others, we unwittingly pass upon ourselves, according to a proverb as old as the poet Hesiod and frequent in the Jewish Talmud, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." And that condemnation is threefold.

1. Harsh censure of others proves us ignorant of ourselves; and this lesson our Lord teaches by another proverb—a carpenter's proverb appropriate on the lips of the Carpenter of Nazareth: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye" or rather "the chip in thy brother's eye, the log in thine own?" "A log in the eye" is indeed a grotesque hyperbole, and since the Hebrew word for "eye" meant also "a well,"

it has been suggested that the proverb should run, "a chip in one's neighbour's well, a log in one's own"; but the hyperbole is characteristically Oriental, pointing the moral the more effectively by its very grotesqueness. A true sense of our own undeserving would refrain our harsh judgment of others.

> I often see in my own thoughts,
> When they lie nearest Thee,
> That the worst men I ever knew
> Were better men than me.

2. Harsh judgment is generally unjust. "Nothing is ever so good as it is thought" remarked Lord Melbourne once in the hearing of Charles Dickens. "And nothing so bad" interposed the novelist. This was ever our Lord's manner; and would not His example bring His admonition home to His disciples? The Arabic poet Nizami tells a story of Him which, like others in Mohammedan literature, may well be more than a fable. Once He was passing through the market-place with His disciples when He espied a dead pariah dog lying in the gutter. It was a loathsome spectacle in Jewish eyes (cf. 1 Sam. xxiv. 14; 2 Sam. ix. 8, xvi. 9), and every passer-by spat upon it; but it stirred His pity. "See," said He, "how beautiful its teeth are! They are white as pearls."

> There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
> Would men observingly distil it out;

and He never missed it. And even of the evil His judgment was always kindly; for, like the good Bishop in *Les Misérables*, He always "examined the road over which the fault had passed"; and truly *comprendre c'est pardonner*. "Many an irritating fault, many an unlovely oddity, has come of a hard sorrow, which has crushed and maimed the nature just when it was expanding into plenteous beauty; and the trivial erring life which we visit with our harsh blame, may be but as the unsteady motion of a man whose best limb is withered." Alas that we should ever forget this! It is pitiful to strike in the dark and learn afterwards that we were striking a wounded creature. "It often happens," says Lecky, "that we have

long been blaming a man for manifest faults of character till at last suicide, or the disclosure of some grave bodily or mental disease which has long been working unperceived, explains his faults and turns our blame to pity."

3. Harsh judgment shows us unmindful of the infinite mercy of God. Among the precious things preserved by the diligence of William Camden, the Elizabethan antiquary, is his memorial of a gentleman who, " falling off his Horse, brake his neck, which suddain hap gave occasion of much speech of his former life, and some in this judging World, judged the worst. In which respect a good Friend made this good Epitaph, remembring that of Saint Augustine, 'Misericordia Domini inter pontem et fontem.'

> My friend judge not me,
> Thou seest I judge not thee:
> Betwixt the stirrop and the ground,
> Mercy I askt, mercy I found."

The mercy of God is infinite, unweariedly pursuing the worst even to the verge of Eternity, holding and beseeching him to the last. He is able to save to the uttermost, beyond the reach of our dim sight, and wherefore should we despair of any?

At the same time discrimination is needful, as the disciples would find in the prosecution of their mission; and this duty our Lord proceeds to inculcate. " *Judge not*, without knowledge, love, necessity " is Bengel's terse comment here; " nevertheless a dog is to be accounted a dog and a swine a swine." Dogs and swine, frequently coupled in Holy Scripture (cf. Is. lxvi. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 22), were both unclean in Jewish eyes; and they stand here for two sorts of person whom the Apostles would encounter—quarrelsome disputants and coarse sensualists. Just as the Greeks had the proverb " a lyre to an ass," so the Jews spoke of " giving what is holy to dogs " and " casting pearls before swine." Perhaps indeed the former maxim was still sharper. For in Aramaic the word for " what is holy " and the word for " a ring," while differing in vocalisation, were written alike; and thus it may be that we should read " give not your signet-ring to dogs." It is an admonition to refrain

from unprofitable controversy, and it was enforced by our Lord's own example. Think how at His trial He "held His peace" when false witnesses gave evidence against Him, and "answered to never a word" of the rulers' charges (cf. xxvi. 63, xxvii. 14). To earnest seekers He was ever gracious, opening His heart to them with unwearied patience; but He would not "give His signet-ring to dogs." "I rejoice," wrote Darwin in the evening of his days, "that I have avoided controversies, and this I owe to Lyell, who many years ago, in reference to my geological works, strongly advised me never to get entangled in a controversy, as it rarely did any good and caused a miserable loss of time and temper." Nor would He "cast His pearls before swine." Think how He met the questioning of that lewd scoffer, the Tetrarch Herod Antipas, "answering him nothing" (cf. Lk. xxiii. 14). Even so it is told of the Greek sage Bias that, "being asked by an impious person, 'What is piety?' he held his peace. And when the fellow inquired the reason of his silence, 'I hold my peace,' said he, 'because you inquire about things which do not befit you.'"

ENCOURAGEMENT IN PRAYER

vii. 7–12

7 *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

8 *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

9 *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?*

10 *Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*

11 *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

12 *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

IT illumines our Lord's language here when we observe that this is another passage of His Lesson on Prayer (cf. Lk. xi. 9–13), being the moral of His parable of the suppliant who came knocking at his neighbour's door at midnight and would take no refusal. When conscious of God's presence, "ask"; when He is hidden, "seek"; when His door is shut, "knock." Our Lord does not here mean that God is ever regardless of our desires and needs to be importuned to compliance therewith. The reason of His irresponsiveness is that our desires are amiss and He loves us too well to grant us what would harm us. This our Lord immediately explains. "Would a human father give his son a stone if he asked it mistaking it for bread? Or," He adds, supposing a case familiar to His fisher disciples who often found a water-snake in their nets, "would he give him a serpent if he asked it mistaking it for

a fish?" A human father denies his children when they ignorantly ask what is not good; and human fatherhood is an image of the Heavenly Fatherhood.

> All fathers learn their craft from Thee;
> All loves are shadows cast
> From the beautiful eternal hills
> Of Thine unbeginning past.

And as a human father denies his children the harmful things which they ignorantly crave, that they may learn what is truly good, so does the Heavenly Father. A prayer, however ill advised, is an expression of the soul's longing; and, if only we keep on longing, He will surely satisfy us and fulfil the desire of our hearts in His own good way. At the moment it may seem as though our prayers were unheeded, our aspirations baffled, our yearnings disappointed; but more and more as life advances we perceive, if we cling to our ideals, how God has all the while been bringing them to a larger and nobler realisation than ever we imagined. "To be a seeker," wrote Cromwell to his daughter, Bridget Ireton, "is to be of the best sect next to a finder; and such an one shall every faithful humble seeker be at the end. Happy seeker, happy finder!"

Here, somewhat abruptly, the Evangelist introduces our Lord's Golden Rule, which St. Luke (cf. vi. 31) incorporates with the Ordination Address. So memorable a saying, being often quoted, would readily be dissociated from its proper context, and the Evangelists would insert it in their narratives where they deemed fit. It was an absolutely new commandment. Other teachers, both Jewish and pagan, had indeed said things resembling it. It is told, for example, of Hillel that once when a Gentile, making a jest of the Rabbinical Law with its multitudinous precepts, promised to embrace the Jewish faith if he would teach him the Law while standing on one foot—a proverbial phrase for doing a thing quickly and easily, the gentle Rabbi answered: "What is hateful to thyself, do not to thy neighbour. This is the whole Law, and the rest is commentary." It is told also of Aristotle that, being asked, "how we should behave to our friends," he replied

"As we would wish them to behave to us." In view of such parallels unbelievers in St. Augustine's day denied the originality of the Golden Rule; and so did the historian Gibbon, alleging a maxim of the Greek orator Isocrates: "What angers you when you experience it at others' hands, this do not to others." But in truth there is a wide difference. Aristotle's maxim had to do merely with behaviour to one's friends, and those of Hillel and Isocrates were negative: "Do not to others what you would not have them do to you." But our Lord's rule is positive: "Do to others whatsoever you would have them do to you"; and this is an immeasurably larger requirement. No teacher had ever said the like; and it is very remarkable, proving how hard His disciples found it, that when we pass from the Gospels to the early literature of the Church, we read there invariably not His Golden Rule but the old negative precept: "All things whatsoever thou wouldst not have done to thee, do not thou to another."

What our Lord inculcates is that understanding spirit of kindly, sympathetic imagination which enables one to make another's case his own; and what is this but the high quality of gentlemanhood? For, says Cardinal Newman, "the true gentleman carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast;—all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make everyone at their ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate." And thus the Golden Rule is the perfect law of gentlemanhood revealed by One who was Himself "the first true gentleman that ever breathed."

THE TWO GATES AND THE TWO WAYS

vii. 13, 14

13 *Enter ye in at the strait gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat :*

14 **Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

THIS, our Lord's answer to the question "Are there few that be saved?" (cf. Lk. xiii. 23, 24), is an ancient allegory which had passed in His day into a commonplace. As old as Hesiod, the Greek peasant-poet of the eighth century, it was elaborated in the sixth by the philosopher Pythagoras of Samos, who illustrated it by the letter ϒ, the archaic form of the Greek capital U, hence known as "the Samian Letter." He interpreted the lower stem as the season of innocent childhood, its upright continuation as the path of virtuous manhood, and the crooked branch to the left as the path of vice. By and by the allegory was popularised by that quaint book, the *Tablet* of Cebes, a sort of Greek *Pilgrim's Progress*. It was a familiar image in our Lord's day ; and just as in His popular discourse He delighted in homely proverbs, so He employs it here to admonish His hearers of the folly of idle speculation. It became them rather to "make their own calling and election sure" by entering the narrow gate and resolutely setting their faces to the steep path which "leadeth unto life." His use of the ancient allegory established it in Christian parlance and in modern literature. How beautifully it is expressed in the old Scots ballad of Thomas the Rhymer!

O see ye not yon narrow road,
So thick beset with thorns and briers?
That is the path of righteousness,
Though after it but few enquires.

*Or, *How.*

And see ye not that braid braid road,
That lies across that lily leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
Though some call it the road to heaven.

Shakespeare has it too:

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whilst, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.

And who can forget Bunyan's "kind of a vision" in *Grace Abounding*? "As the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could but with great difficulty enter in thereat, it showed me that none could enter into life but those that were in downright earnest and left the wicked world behind them: for here was only room for body and soul but not for body and soul and sin."

FALSE TEACHERS

vii. 15–27

15 *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

16 *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

17 *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

18 *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

19 *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

20 *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

21 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

22 *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

23 *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

24 *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

25 *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

26 *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

ANOTHER passage from the Ordination Address (cf. Lk. vi. 43–49), where our Lord admonishes His Apostles of a trouble which, as the Book of Acts and the Epistles testify, they experienced after His departure by the rise of false teachers and also, alas! by the deceitfulness of their own hearts. The peril of false teachers, like the Judaists who combated St. Paul's Gospel of free grace and the Cerinthians whom St. John encountered at Ephesus, is that they present themselves as friends of the truth. They are indeed "ravening wolves," "grievous wolves, not sparing the flock" (cf. Ac. xx. 29), but they "come in sheep's clothing," that is, disguised as shepherds, since a shepherd wore a sheepskin mantle. "A goatherd was he," says Theocritus in his seventh Idyl, "nor could any that saw him have taken him for other than he was, for all about him bespoke the goatherd. Stripped from the roughest of he-goats was the tawny skin which he wore on his shoulders." And how may they be distinguished? "By their fruits," says our Lord, "ye shall know them"—a natural change of metaphor where a herdman was also a husbandman (cf. Am. vii. 14). No test is needed in the case of open adversaries of the Gospel. We do not expect a thorn-tree to bear clusters of grapes or a thistle to bear figs. But what of professedly Christian teachers? Their test is not the kind but the quality of their fruit. "A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit," though "sometimes," says Thomas Halyburton, "it may bring forth *good-like* fruit." The test of a tree is the quality of its fruit: is it sweet and satisfying? And the test of a teacher is the quality of his teaching: does it delight the heart and nourish the soul?

Where this is lacking, no other credential avails. (1) No pious profession or protestation of devotion. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord." It is told of the Jewish philosopher, Benedict Spinoza, that once, a child of ten years, he was sent to receive payment of an account from a neighbour

in the city of Amsterdam, an old lady who made a large profession. He found her reading the Scriptures, and was bidden be quiet until she had concluded her pious exercise. Then she addressed herself to the business, counting the money into his bag and all the while lauding his father's faithfulness to the Sacred Law and exhorting him to follow so excellent an example. He checked the payment and found it short by two ducats, which she had slily dropped into her till through a slit in the counter. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." And (2) not even success; for worthless instruments may be used of God. Is it not an impressive fact that Judas, like the rest, received the Lord's commission, and, like the rest, preached in His name, and in His name cast out devils, and in His name did many wonderful works?

> Alas, my brother! round thy tomb
> In sorrow kneeling, and in fear,
> We read the Pastor's doom
> Who speaks and will not hear.

A stranger visiting the glens of the Grampian Mountains in the drought of summer may wonder when he sees a trickling stream, which a child might cross dryshod, spanned by a high-arched bridge of solid masonry. It seems a waste of labour. But the builder knew that it is not always summer, and he built a bridge to endure when the stream comes down in spate, a roaring torrent brimming full and sweeping down whatever obstructs its resistless career. Even so there surely comes for us all a day which will prove the worth of our thoughts and works; and this lesson we read here in our Lord's parable of the Two Builders. One was "a wise man" and the other "a foolish man"—the same words wherewith in another parable (cf. xxv. 1–13) our Lord characterises the ten virgins who "took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." Five were "wise," inasmuch as they prudently took with them a supply of oil in their flasks; and the others were "foolish," inasmuch as they made no such provision. And so with these two builders. They built their houses side by side on a level,

like the Plain of Jericho, by the riverside. It was summertime ; but one of them anticipated the winter and, says St. Luke (vi. 48), " he dug deep "—literally " dug and deepened "—till he got down not to " a rock " but to " the rock," the solid bedrock beneath the alluvial deposit, and thereon he " laid a foundation." His improvident neighbour took no such pains. He " built his house upon the sand "—" built it," says St. Luke, " upon the earth without a foundation." It looked as well as the other, perhaps better, since by saving time and labour he had more to expend on its adornment. But presently down came the spate and rushed against the houses. One stood the strain ; " for it had been founded upon the rock " ; but the waters swept away the soil beneath the other, and it collapsed and crashed into ruins. " Other foundation," says the Apostle (1 Cor. iii. 11), " can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ " ; and alas for those who build on aught else !

> On brotel ground they builde, and brotelnesse
> They finde, whan they wene sickernesse.

THE WONDER OF OUR LORD'S TEACHING

vii. 28, 29

28 *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:*

29 *For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

IT was the note of authority ringing in every sentence which He uttered that astonished our Lord's hearers. They marked it in His first sermon in the Synagogue of Capernaum (cf. Mk. i. 22; Lk. iv. 32); and they marked it with ever fresh astonishment to the last (cf. xiii. 54, xix. 25, xxii. 33). And no wonder; for they had never heard the like. It was not thus that their Scribes taught them. For those learned men, the Rabbis, "the Teachers of Israel," were servile traditionalists, counting no doctrine authoritative unless it had the sanction of a great name. It is told, for example, how once at a Rabbinical conference, after much discussion of a difficult question, appeal was made to Rabbi Hillel. He pronounced his judgment and supported it by argument; but his reasoning carried no conviction, since he alleged no authority and "law without traditional authority is no law." At length he bethought himself. "It occurs to me," said he, "that I heard it from Shemaiah and Abtalion"; and this determined the question: they arose and acclaimed him their President. No wonder that the people were astonished when they heard our Lord quote precept after precept from the Sacred Law only to supersede each with a larger revelation: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you. . . ." And no wonder their astonishment grew. At first it would seem to them that after generations of spiritual barrenness the spirit of prophecy had been poured forth as of old; but they would quickly perceive that this was no mere prophet. For the ancient

prophets had ever spoken in the name of God, proclaiming the message which He had given them; but our Lord spoke in His own name and on His own authority. It was not a message from God that they heard from His lips: it was God's own voice.

MIRACLES OF HEALING

viii. 1–17

1 *When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.*

2 *And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

3 *And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

4 *And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

5 *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,*

6 *And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.*

7 *And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.*

8 *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.*

9 *For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

10 *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

11 *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*

12 *But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

13 *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.*

14 *And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.*

15 *And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them.*

16 *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:*

17 *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

ST. MATTHEW was neither an historian nor a biographer. He was an Evangelist; and his design was not to trace our Lord's progress through the world step by step and stage after stage in chronological sequence, but to illustrate the glory of His person and the wonder of His work. "This, to be sure," observes Thackeray after recounting something of his hero Philip, "was in a later stage of his career, but I take up the biography here and there, so as to give the best idea I may of my friend's character." Even so—with reverence be it said—the Evangelist's purpose was to show his readers what manner of person the Saviour was, and this he illustrates by grouping apt instances of His sayings and doings, regardless of time and place. Just as "the Sermon on the Mount" is a collection of various discourses of our Lord illustrating the manner of His teaching, so here, to illustrate another large aspect of His work—His ministry of healing—we find grouped together three characteristic miracles which, as appears from the narratives of St. Mark and St. Luke, happened widely apart.

1. *The Healing of a Leper* (cf. Mk. i. 40–45; Lk. v. 12–16). It was shortly after our Lord's settlement at Capernaum and, embarrassed by the commotion which His miracles had excited, He had retired inland and was making a tour through Galilee. It was there, "in one of the cities," that this incident occurred. It is at the first glance surprising to read of a leper thus openly,

as it seems, approaching our Lord; for a leper was unclean, bound to dwell apart and debarred from human intercourse (cf. Lev. xiii. 45, 46; Num. v. 1–4). But the explanation presently appears. It was the close of the day, and our Lord had retired from the multitude. While He was discoursing to them, the outcast had "stood afar off" (cf. Lk. xvii. 12), fain to approach Him and crave healing. But he durst not. It is told of one Rabbi zealous for ceremonial purity that, whenever he espied a leper, he would pelt him with stones and cry: "Begone to thine own place, that thou pollute not others"; and how would this poor creature have been received by the crowd had he ventured near? But his need was desperate, and when he saw the Divine Healer pass into His lodging, he plucked up heart and pressed in after Him, and kneeling before Him cried: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst cleanse me!" A Rabbi would have spurned the wretch and bidden him begone; but see what the Lord did. "He stretched forth (R.V.) His hand, and" not merely "touched" but "grasped him." When good Queen Eleanor with her own lips sucked the poison from the wound which an assassin's dagger had inflicted on King Edward I in the Holy Land, it was indeed a moving demonstration of the power of love to conquer natural disgust and "render every bitter thing sweet and pleasant to the taste"; but he was her dear husband, and more wonderful surely was the instinctive tenderness which prompted our Lord to lay a caressing hand on the rotting flesh of an outcast whom any other would have shunned with averted eyes. "I will" said He; "be cleansed"; and at the word "his flesh," like Naaman's of old, "came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." He would have poured out his gratitude, but the Lord checked him. "He sternly charged him," says St. Mark (i. 43 R.V. marg.), "and straightway sent him out"—"thrust him out of doors." His charge was twofold: (1) "See thou tell no man," proving that it was in the privacy of the Lord's abode that the miracle was wrought. And wherefore would He have it thus concealed? Here is the first indication of an embarrassment which our Lord was already experiencing and which increased as His ministry advanced. His miracles

persuaded the people of His Messiahship ; and this would have been well had they truly conceived it. But, as we have seen (cf. iv. 8–10), they were dreaming of a national deliverer, and their acclamation was a political enthusiasm, not merely lacking spiritual value but imperilling His ministry by exposing it to the animadversion of the Roman Government. (2) " Go, shew thyself to the priest." When a leper recovered of his plague, it was required by the Law (cf. Lev. xiv) that he should submit himself to the priest for examination ; and only when he had been officially pronounced clean and had rendered a thank-offering was he freed from the ban and suffered to resume his place in society. Our Lord insisted on the punctilious observance of this form " for a testimony unto them," at once convincing the Jewish authorities of His divine commission by the evidence of the miracle and assuring them of His loyalty to the ordinances of the Sacred Law.

2. *A Centurion's Servant* (cf. Lk. vii. 1–10). Always especially concerned with the teaching of our Lord, St. Matthew has here, as in other instances, abbreviated the narrative that His sayings may receive the more attention. St. Luke relates the incident in dramatic detail ; but meanwhile let us take the story as St. Matthew tells it and learn the lessons which he intends. Though a Gentile, this centurion, a subordinate officer of the Roman garrison at Capernaum (cf. iv. 12–16), was not a pagan. At that period when, as Gibbon has it, " the various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people as equally true ; by the philosopher, as equally false ; and by the magistrate, as equally useful," the human heart was still hungering for God, and many earnest souls in heathendom were captivated by the faith of Israel. Its ceremonial repelled them, but in its revelation of the one living and true God and His providential purposes they found the satisfaction which they craved. They did not profess the Jewish religion by submitting to Circumcision and the Baptism of Proselytes, but they studied the Scriptures and participated in the worship of Temple and Synagogue with such exemplary devotion that they were known as " the devout," the " fearers of God," or " the worshippers of God " (cf. Ac. x. 2, 22, xiii. 16,

26, xviii. 7). They mostly belonged to the upper classes of society and, as the historian Josephus testifies, they frequently displayed a munificence which earned them much deference. They played an important part in the early days of Christianity, since their hearts, imperfectly satisfied by Judaism, were peculiarly open to the Gospel's appeal; and the Apostles won many converts among them. One of these was the Ethiopian Chamberlain (cf. Ac. viii. 26–40), and Cornelius the Centurion of Cæsarea was another (x–xi. 18).

This centurion of Capernaum also was a "God-fearer"; and he was, as soldiers so often are, a simple-hearted, courteous, and kindly gentleman. It was this last quality that brought him on the scene. His servant—literally his "boy" (cf. R.V. marg.), meaning his personal attendant, his orderly—had been stricken with palsy. Though only a slave (cf. ver. 5 R.V. marg.), he had endeared himself to his master, doubtless, like other slaves of ancient story, by some signal service, perhaps the succouring of him at the risk of his own life when hardly bested in battle. His case was desperate, but hope rekindled in the centurion's breast when he heard of the Lord's return to Capernaum, and he appealed to Him on behalf of his faithful retainer. It was a modest request that he intended, but the Lord did not wait to hear it out. "I will come," said He, "and heal him"; and then the centurion explained what he desired. An "untutor'd mind" naturally construes the Unseen in terms of its own experience, and the centurion conceived "the Celestial Hierarchy" after the pattern of the imperial army with its legions, its cohorts, and its centuries, and its ranks of officers, all under the supreme authority of the Emperor. Hence he fetched his argument. If he, an inferior officer, a mere captain, had soldiers under him, and had only to command and his will was executed, surely the Lord had but to "speak the word" and angels would speed unseen on His errand of mercy. Crude as it may have been, the idea evinced a large faith. A Gentile though he was, the centurion had recognised in the Divine Healer the Lord of men and angels, displaying herein a larger and truer faith by far than the Jewish multitude who acclaimed Him as their national deliverer. It was a glad

surprise, and turning to the attendant throng, "I have not found so great faith," He exclaimed, "no, not in Israel!" There was indeed sorrow in the exclamation—sorrow at the Jewish people's slowness of heart; but there was gladness in it too. For the centurion's faith was an earnest of that larger triumph—the ingathering of the Gentiles. And the Evangelist shows how this thought even now comforted our Lord by introducing here those words of His (vers. 11, 12) which, as St. Luke shows (cf. xiii. 28, 29), He spoke on a later occasion.

3. *The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law* (cf. Mk. i. 29–34; Lk. iv. 38–41). This incident, as the other Evangelists show, occurred on the first Sabbath after our Lord's settlement at Capernaum. He had attended the afternoon service in the synagogue and had not only addressed the congregation but wrought a miracle—the healing of a demoniac—which by reason of its novelty had astonished the spectators. Thereafter He went home with Peter. On their arrival they found that Peter's mother-in-law had sickened of the fever so prevalent in the basin of the Lake some 680 feet below sea-level. Approaching her couch, the Lord "touched" or rather "grasped (cf. ver. 3) her hand"; and instantly she was healed. There was no lingering weakness, no gradual convalescence. She arose, and in her gratitude she claimed, though the oldest in the household, and accustomed not to minister but to be ministered unto, the privilege of "ministering," according to the true reading, "unto *Him*" or, as the word—elsewhere rendered "serve" (cf. Lk. x. 40; Jo. xii. 2)—signifies, "waiting on Him at table." She ministered indeed, as the other Evangelists say, to the others too, but of Him she had a special care, compassing Him with loving and reverent observance.

> At her poor table will He eat?
> He shall be served there
> With honour and devotion meet
> For any king that were!

The healing of the demoniac in the synagogue that afternoon had enkindled hope in many a troubled heart. What He had done for one He might do for others, and such as had sick in

their homes hastened to bring them and lay them at His feet. Only where life was in immediate danger did the Rabbinical law permit the treatment of maladies on the Sabbath Day, but the Sabbath ended, according to the Jewish reckoning, at sunset, and as soon as "the even was come" Peter's house was beset by an eager throng with their piteous burdens. He healed them all, not in the mass but, as St. Luke observes, one by one, "laying His hands on every one of them" in tender sympathy and so winning their trust; and St. Matthew recognises in the scene a fulfilment of that ancient prophecy of a burden-bearing Messiah (Is. liii. 4): "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." So it runs in our Version, but it is physical grief that is primarily denoted by the language of the original, and the Jewish Evangelist, familiar with the Hebrew text, more truly renders it: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." It was, as we have seen (cf. Introduction, p. xv), St. Matthew's wont in telling the story of our Blessed Lord thus to point out its fulfilments of the prophetic Scriptures in order to persuade his Jewish readers that He was indeed their Messiah; but here he has a further and larger purpose. He would have us see what His healing ministry cost the Saviour. There is no healing where there is no faith, and there is no faith where there is no sympathy, and no sympathy without love. And love, as Horace Bushnell was never weary of proclaiming, is "a principle essentially vicarious in its nature, identifying the subject with others, so as to suffer their adversities and pains, and taking on itself the burden of their evil." It was his rare sympathy that made Henry Drummond a helper of men, and one who was near him amid the stress of his University mission testified what it cost him: "I found him leaning with his head bowed on the mantelpiece, looking into the fire. He raised a haggard, worn face when I spoke to him, and I made him take a glass of wine, and asked him if he were very tired. 'No,' he said, 'not very. But oh, I am sick with the sins of these men! How can God bear it?'"

A RETREAT ACROSS THE LAKE (viii. 18–34)

1. *HINDRANCES BY THE WAY*

viii. 18–22

18 *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.*

19 *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee, whithersoever thou goest.*

20 *And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

21 *And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

22 *But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

IT is no wonder that, when the work was done, our Lord was weary. As it is elsewhere written of Him in a like case (cf. Mk. v. 30), "virtue had gone out of Him," and He needed repose. And so, as He was wont when thus forspent, He resolved to withdraw for a season from Capernaum with His disciples. On this occasion, according to St. Mark (i. 35–39) and St. Luke (iv. 42–44), He retired inland; but, since St. Matthew omits that expedition through Galilee, he appropriately tells here the story of a later retreat across the lake to the quiet eastern shore (cf. Mk. iv. 35–v. 20; Lk. viii. 22–36).

It was difficult for our Lord to effect His retreat, so continually was He beset with importunities; and the Evangelist illustrates His embarrassment by introducing at this juncture two incidents which St. Luke records in another connection (cf. ix. 57–62) and which, though collocated by both Evangelists, doubtless occurred on distinct occasions. They belong to the

early days of His ministry, when He was forming His disciple-company, observing the men who responded to His teaching and choosing such as He judged fit. It was a solemn vocation, involving not merely the immediate sacrifice of forsaking home and friends and worldly employment to share His ministry but the sorer ordeal of continuing the work after His departure in face of obloquy and persecution. None who realised what it meant would lightly have desired it; and hence it is that He called His Apostles. They did not volunteer. In every recorded instance He chose them, and they gladly yet fearfully obeyed. Such as light-heartedly volunteered He rejected; but when He called a man, being satisfied of his fitness, He would take no refusal. Here we have both cases exemplified.

The volunteer was "a certain Scribe," literally "one Scribe" (R.V. marg.). It was indeed a unique case, since the Scribes, that learned order of the Pharisees, were mostly our Lord's bitter adversaries. Surely the winning of such a recruit would have been a signal triumph; yet he was rejected, and the reason appears from our Lord's response to his glib protestation of devotion. Like so many in those early days he had been impressed by our Lord's miracles. These persuaded him that, lowly though He was in outward guise, He was indeed the Messiah, and He would presently manifest Himself in His proper majesty as the King of Israel; and therefore he would share His present lowliness that he might share His imminent glory. Our Lord knew what his thought was, and He quietly set before him the chill reality.

> The eagle has her eyrie,
> The lark her lowly bed;
> But the Son of Man, when weary,
> Nowhere to lay His head.

Such was His earthly portion, and His destination was not a throne in Jerusalem but a cross on Calvary: would the Scribe follow Him thither?

The nerve of the sentence is that designation "the Son of Man," which occurs here first in the Evangelist's narrative. What does it mean? "The sons of man" was a Jewish phrase

for " the common people," " the low " or " men of low degree " as it is rendered in our Version of the Old Testament (cf. Pss. xlix. 2, lxii. 9) ; and it is significant that, frequent as it is in the Gospels, the title " the Son of Man " is never found save on our Lord's own lips. It is His constant designation of Himself, and no one else ever so designates Him. Others, who recognised Him as the Messiah, the prophetic King of Israel, styled Him " the Son of David " or in precisely the same sense " the Son of God " (cf. iii. 17) ; and here lies the explanation of His chosen designation. It was His protest against the Messianic ideal of His contemporaries. The Messiah whom they were dreaming of was a national deliverer, a king of David's lineage who should restore the ancient throne in more than its ancient glory.

> They all were looking for a king
> To slay their foes, and lift them high :
> He came a little baby thing
> That made a woman cry ;

and He dwelt among " the sons of men," a man of low degree. What could they make of His claim to be the Saviour promised of old ? Even His disciples were puzzled, and they fancied that His lowliness was but a temporary disguise and He would presently cast it aside and appear in His rightful majesty. And so it was that to dispel this vain imagination He eschewed those kingly titles and called Himself " the Son of Man," " the Man of low degree." See exposition of Jo. i. 51.

And now by way of contrast the Evangelist tells of one whom the Lord called and who would fain have refused. Tradition has it that he was Philip the Apostle, and indeed it is very likely. Certainly he was one of the Twelve ; for when he demurred, the Lord brushed his pretext aside and constrained him, and moreover the diffidence which he evinces here was characteristic of Philip as he appears in the Gospel-story. Whoever he may have been, he was already a disciple, and the Master had marked his fitness for the higher service of the Apostleship. St. Luke tells us that He took the first word. " Follow Me " He said ; and it was then that the disciple urged his excuse, not refusing outright but pleading a prior claim :

" Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." If his father were lying dead, surely it was a sacred duty that he should pay him the last sad tribute of affection; yet what was the Lord's rejoinder? It is stern enough as the Evangelist reports it, but according to the earliest record it was sterner still—stern and sharp and contemptuous: " Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but thou—follow thou Me." It is no less than horrifying to hear from those loving lips a demand befitting the lips of a monastic dead to human affections. But consider what the disciple's excuse really meant. It was a common phrase still current in the unchanging East. It is told, for example, by a Christian missionary in Syria that once, when he counselled a young Turk to complete his education by travelling in Europe, he got the answer: " I must first bury my father." On his expressing sympathy the young man explained that he meant merely that his first duty was the care of his relatives and he could not meanwhile leave home. It was the same excuse that this young disciple pleaded, unlike James and John who at the Master's call left their father Zebedee to ply his fishercraft alone (cf. iv. 22). It is no wonder that He brushed it so sternly aside as unbefitting one who was " alive unto God " and was assured of His gracious providence. Think of Bunyan's words when he was had away to prison for Christ's sake, leaving his wife and children unprovided for, " especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all beside. Oh, the thoughts of the hardship I thought my poor blind one might go under would break my heart to pieces! Poor child, thought I, what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world! Thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow upon thee. But yet recalling myself, thought I, I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you. Oh, I saw in this condition I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children! yet thought I, I must do it, I must do it."

2. *STILLING THE STORM*

viii. 23–27

23 *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.*

24 *And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves : but he was asleep.*

25 *And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us : we perish.*

26 *And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith ? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea ; and there was a great calm.*

27 *But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him !*

REACHING the harbour of Bethsaida, our Lord embarked with His disciples, not " in a ship " since there were no ships on a little inland lake, but " in a boat " or rather " the boat "—the little boat which, as St. Mark (iii. 9) explains, He had instructed His fisher disciples to keep in readiness for such occasions. It was late when they set out on the long row of some seven miles, and so weary was He that He fell asleep. They were well off shore, threading their way among the fleet of fishing craft which nightly plied their business there (cf. Mk. iv. 36), when suddenly the stillness was broken by one of those fierce tempests so frequent on the Lake, especially at the close of a sultry day, when the western sea-breeze, encountering the warm atmosphere of the hill-girt basin, is sucked down the ravines. Instantly the Lake was lashed into fury. " There arose," says the Evangelist, " a great tempest " or rather " commotion (the word which commonly signifies " an earthquake ") in the sea," and the waves washed over the frail vessel. The Master slept on till the terrified disciples

awoke Him. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" He remonstrated in His accustomed phrase of wonderment at their obliviousness of the heavenly care which continually encompassed them (cf. vi. 30).

It is worth while pausing here to recall that these are the words which were used of God for the salvation of Dr. John Owen, that most learned of the Puritan divines. Awakened at Oxford to his spiritual need, he had come up to London, and one Sunday morning he repaired with a companion to Aldermanbury Chapel in the hope of hearing there a message of peace from the eloquent lips of Dr. Edmund Calamy. To his disappointment an unknown preacher entered the pulpit. His companion suggested that they should withdraw and wait upon the ministration of another celebrated divine; but Owen was too weary and dispirited. The simple earnestness of the stranger's devotions impressed him, and when the text was announced "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" he breathed a prayer for the needed message. His desire was fulfilled: ere the sermon ended, he found the peace which he had sought so long. It is remarkable that, though he inquired diligently, he failed to discover who that stranger was. A humble minister, he had been summoned in an emergency to occupy the famous pulpit, and he returned to his obscure place and never while he lived knew what God had wrought by him.

The Lord arose and, as though they were raging beasts, rebuked the winds and waves, and they obeyed. This, like all His mighty works in the days of His flesh, was wrought by the indwelling power of God (cf. Jo. xiv. 10). It was an act of the Creator, and none will count it incredible who recognises that "the sea is His, and He made it," and "the winds are His messengers (Ps. civ. 4 R.V.), fulfilling His word." Those storms on the Lake of Galilee, so violent while they last, are usually short-lived; but the Evangelist is careful to observe that this was no natural subsidence. "There was," he says, or rather "there ensued a great calm," no sullen swell heaving the bosom of the Lake long after the wind had ceased. The marvel was noted not only by the disciples but by "the men"

—the crews of the other boats. In all their experience they had never known the like, and they exclaimed in wonderment : " What manner of man is this ? " So their question runs in our Version, but in the original it is much more significant. The interrogative denotes properly nationality—not " of what manner " or " sort " but " of what country," and its significance here is aptly illustrated by two other passages where it occurs. (1) " Behold," says St. John in his first epistle (iii. 1), " what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us "—a love from what realm remote, so far transcending the best love of this cold world ; and so " what unearthly love ! " (2) " Seeing then," says St. Peter in his second epistle (iii. 11), " that these things are thus to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be—what other-worldly, what heavenly-minded persons ! " Here is the meaning of the exclamation of those fishermen on the Lake when they beheld the tempest cease at the Lord's command. " What unearthly personage is this ! " they cried ; " a visitant from what higher region, what heavenly country ! "

3. *HEALING A DEMONIAC*

viii. 28–34

28 *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.*

29 *And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*

30 *And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.*

31 *So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.*

32 *And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.*

33 *And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.*

34 *And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.*

CONTINUING their course, they landed on the eastern shore in "the country of the Gergesenes"—the people of Gergesa or, as the Aramaic name was otherwise transliterated, Gerasa (cf. Mk. v. 1; Lk. viii. 26 R.V.). The reading "Gadarenes" is an error of later copyists unacquainted with the country, since Gadara lay well inland to the south of the Lake. This town of Gergesa (Gerasa), says Sir George Adam Smith, "has been identified with the ruins known as Khersa, at the only portion of that coast on which the steep

hills come to the shore" ; and close by is the site of the ancient burial-place marked by sepulchres hewn out of the rocky face of the mountain. It would be early morning when they landed, and the Lord led His disciples up the hillside, thinking to find there a peaceful retreat (cf. Mt. xiv. 23 ; Mk. vi. 46 ; Jo. vi. 15) ; but as they approached the burial-place, they were confronted by a fearsome apparition. It was universally believed of old that all distemperatures, moral, mental, and physical, were due to the possession of the sufferers by malignant spirits. That was the established theory, held not alone by the ignorant multitude but by wise philosophers and grave physicians ; and it persisted long, even Luther "accounting madmen and idiots to be possessed by evil spirits and physicians to be mistaken in ascribing those disorders to natural causes." There were "lying spirits," inspiring falsehood and error (cf. 1 Ki. xxii. 2 ; 1 Jo. iv. 6), and "unclean spirits," which occasioned immorality and loathsome diseases, especially epilepsy with its concomitants of shrieking, wallowing, and foaming (cf. Mk. i. 21–28 ; Lk. iv. 31–37; Mt. xvii. 14; Mk. ix. 14–29; Lk. ix. 37–43). But nowhere was demoniacal possession so clearly recognised as in madness. Indeed the mere idea, once lodged in an otherwise sane mind, was nothing else than insanity. It created that curious hallucination of a dual personality so frequently exemplified in the Gospel narratives, where the demoniac speaks now in his proper person and anon in that of the spirit or, as was supposed in serious cases, the spirits which possessed him. Observe, for example, how the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum addressed our Lord (Lk. iv. 34) : "What have *we* to do with Thee ? *I* know Thee who Thou art."

Here lies the explanation of a curious discrepancy between the evangelic narratives of the case before us. Whereas according to St. Matthew there were two demoniacs, according to St. Mark and St. Luke there was only one. There was indeed only one. He was a madman, and the notion of his disordered brain, as St. Mark and St. Luke state, was that he was possessed not by one but a legion, a whole regiment of demons. Hence, since, identifying himself with the demons which possessed him, he speaks in the plural number, it was naturally inferred, in early

days when there were no written Gospels and the story was orally transmitted, that there were two demoniacs; and it is this form of the story that our Evangelist has preserved.

Understanding this and keeping the fuller narratives of the other Evangelists in view, let us see how the Divine Healer dealt with the distressful case. Since there were no asylums then, the maniac was suffered to roam at large. He haunted the mountain, yelling and gashing his naked body on the sharp rocks, couching in the cave-sepulchres and rushing out in fury on the passers-by. He was the terror of the neighbourhood. Attempts had been made to control him, but his frenzied strength had always burst his fetters. Espying a company of strangers, he rushed at them, but on getting near he recognised our Lord and knelt down before Him. How did he know Him? It may well be that ere his seizure he had been accustomed to visit Capernaum, and there had heard our Lord discoursing and witnessed His miracles, those evidences of His Messiahship. His soul had been stirred, but he had resisted the gracious appeal, and now when he sees the rejected Saviour, he is conscience-stricken. Observe how the Lord deals with him. After the manner of a wise physician He humours the frenzy of the disordered brain. "This species of double consciousness," says Sir Walter in an instructive note on Norna the Reim-kennar, "makes wild work with the patient's imagination, and, judiciously used, is perhaps a frequent means of restoring sanity of intellect. Exterior circumstances striking the senses often have a powerful effect in undermining or battering the airy castles which the disorder has excited." To this end our Lord first of all commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man (cf. Mk. v. 8). This was His accustomed procedure, and generally the authority of His calm, strong, gracious personality prevailed; but here so firm was the delusion that it persisted. Nevertheless it was shaken. The maniac conceived that the Messiah, anticipating the Final Judgment, had come in vengeance, and, speaking in name of the demons, he deprecated His wrath: "What have we to do with Thee" or, as the phrase signified among the Jews (see exposition of Jo. ii. 4), "why art Thou troubling us, Thou Son of God?"

Pursuing His purpose and thinking thus to recall him to his proper self, the Lord next asked him : " What is thy name ? " Still the hallucination persisted. " My name is Legion," he answered with a confusion of personality ; " for we are many." The hallucination persisted, but it was yielding ; and he now capitulates in name of the demons. The ancient belief was that the proper haunt of evil spirits was the desolate wilderness (cf. Mt. xii. 43) ; and the madman, speaking in name of the demons, begged that, since they must quit their human abode, they should not be banished " out of the country," the cultivated, inhabited country, to the lonely desert. The population on the eastern side of the Lake was mainly heathen, and a herd of some two thousand swine was feeding hard by on the hillside ; and the proposal of the demons was that they should be suffered to take possession of the unclean beasts. It was indeed an insane idea, but the Lord perceived in it an opportunity of ridding the distraught mind of its delusion. The sequel is aptly illustrated by the experience which made the fortune of Sir James Wylie, the once celebrated Court-physician of the Tsar Alexander I. It was toward the close of the eighteenth century, and the unhappy old Tsar Paul I was vexed by an insane notion that a bee had entered his ear and was lodged in his brain. His courtiers were at their wits' end, when they heard of a skilful Scottish surgeon who was serving on a ship just arrived at Cronstadt, and they proposed that he should be summoned to the palace. Apprised of the circumstances, young Wylie provided himself with a bee, and after examining the ear of the august patient he pronounced " that there was really a bee inside, but that he would soon effect its removal. He made some manipulations about the imperial head, exclaimed that he had caught the creature, and then, turning to Paul, asked if he did not now feel himself rid of the pest. The Emperor answered that it was really so ; and from that day the surgeon's position at Court was assured." It was precisely so that the demoniac's delusion was dispelled. " Send us into the swine " prayed the demons. " Go " answered our Lord. The man rushed toward the herd and, startled by his onset and his wild outcry, the creatures stampeded and plunged

over the precipice into the Lake. He was dispossessed! The unclean spirits had left him, never to return. He was sure of it; for had he not seen it with his own eyes?

The soothing of his frenzy by the dispelling of his hallucination was but the beginning of the miracle, and the Lord completed it by the communication of His healing grace. So singular a work of mercy should have won Him a welcome in that country; but what ensued? (1) He had come thither to enjoy a season of repose and quiet communion with His disciples, and the stir which the miracle occasioned frustrated His design. And (2) the attitude of the Gergesenes hastened His departure. The swineherds reported what had befallen. Surely the recovery of their neighbour from his madness should have gladdened the townsfolk; but selfishness is the master passion of the human breast, and they thought only of the loss of their swine. Apprehending further damage to their property, they would fain be rid of the wonder-working stranger. "The whole city," says the Evangelist, "came out *to meet Jesus*." Observe the significance of the phrase. It denoted properly a public ovation; and it is used in the New Testament, for example, of the ten virgins going out to meet the bridegroom (Mt. xxv. 6), of the people going forth to meet our Lord and escort Him in triumph into Jerusalem (Jo. xii. 13, 18), and of the brethren of Rome going forth to meet the Apostle at Appii Forum (Ac. xxviii. 15). And even so, "preferring swine to Christ," those Gergesenes, eager to be rid of Him yet fearing to offend Him, went out to meet Him and petitioned Him to "depart out of their coasts."

HEALING A PARALYTIC

ix. 1–8

1 *And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.*

2 *And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

3 *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*

4 *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*

5 *For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?*

6 *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

7 *And he arose, and departed to his house.*

8 *But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*

HIS "own city" was neither Bethlehem where He was born, nor Nazareth where He had been brought up and where dwelt His kinsfolk after the flesh. It was Capernaum. An ancient proverb had it that "one's country is wherever one is well off"; and on that reckoning what country could He have called His own who had nowhere on earth to lay His head? "After all," says an English novelist, "that is the best place to live in where one has a strong reason for living"; and our Lord accounted Capernaum His own city because His work was there.

This story is told by all the three Synoptists (cf. Mk. ii. 1–12; Lk. v. 17–26); and here after his wont St. Matthew abridges

the common narrative, omitting much picturesque detail, that we may attend without distraction to the things which were spoken by our Lord. And truly he did well ; for here we have from our Lord's own lips an emphatic and singularly impressive affirmation of His true deity. It appears that this paralytic's was a case of sin as well as suffering : his constitution had been shattered by excess. The spectacle of his misery touched our Lord's heart, and reading penitence in his wistful face He greeted him with an assurance of forgiveness. "Son, be of good cheer," said He, or rather, since he was a very babe for helplessness, "Courage, child ! Thy sins are forgiven." It was an offence to those Scribes, those Rabbis, who were present. And wherefore ? Because forgiveness is a prerogative of God, and by assuming it our Lord was, in their judgment, guilty of blasphemy : He made Himself God. He overheard their mutterings, and He put a question to them : "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise, and walk ? " They held their peace, but the question had already been authoritatively decided, since it was an article of Rabbinical theology that sickness is always a chastisement for sin (cf. Jo. ix. 2), and only when the sin has been forgiven can the sickness be healed. Understanding this, we perceive the purport of His further procedure. That they might know that He had authority to forgive sins, He healed the man before their eyes. According to their own doctrine the healing of his sickness proved the antecedent forgiveness of his sin. Note then the argument. They charged Him with blasphemy inasmuch as He arrogated to Himself the divine prerogative of absolution. Had He been a mere man, He must, as St. Chrysostom remarks, have repudiated the imputation and protested that He had no thought of making Himself God. But He did no such thing. On the contrary, He forthwith wrought the miracle which proved His authority of absolution, thus not merely asserting but *ex hypothesi* demonstrating His deity.

THE CALLING OF MATTHEW

ix. 9–13

9 *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

10 *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

11 *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

12 *But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

13 *But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

THE imperial taxation of tributary states was farmed out to companies of capitalists, known in Latin as "publicans" or officers of the public revenue. They were responsible for a fixed payment to the imperial exchequer, and whatever more they could exact from their provinces was their own emolument. Residing at Rome, they employed local agents, who in turn found their profit in the excess of their exactions over their commitments to their superiors. It was a cruel system, and the odium fell upon those local publicans or taxgatherers. All over the Empire they were detested by the victims of their rapacity, but nowhere so hotly as in Palestine, since they were the agents of the heathen oppressor. Their very presence, proclaiming the national servitude, was an offence to patriotism and religion, and it was a vexed question with true-hearted Jews whether they should "pay tribute to Cæsar" or by refusing it declare open rebellion. Specially

obnoxious were those Jews, all too numerous, who, oblivious of loyalty and faith, engaged in the odious service. They were pariahs, outcasts from social and religious fellowship; and they were coupled in common parlance with "sinners," "harlots," "heathen" (cf. xi. 19, xviii. 17, xxi. 31, 32). Nor was the characterisation far amiss. For not only would no right-thinking man engage in a discreditable occupation, but obloquy renders men reckless and defiant, and the publicans generally lived up to their evil reputation.

It astonished the people and shocked the Pharisees that our Lord had a kindly interest in those outcasts, insomuch that He was styled opprobriously "the Friend of Publicans and Sinners" (cf. xi. 19); and the wonderment was extreme when He called a publican from his desk at the custom-house to join the company of His Apostles—a publican and a Jewish publican, as his Jewish name proves. He is called here Matthew in token that he was none other than the Evangelist, the writer not indeed of our Gospel but of that Aramaic Book of our Lord's Sayings which was the basis of our Gospel (cf. Introduction, p. xv); and it is very remarkable that the other Evangelists call him Levi (cf. Mk. ii. 14; Lk. v. 27). The reason is that Levi was his original name, while Matthew ("the Gift of the Lord") is the new name which, even as Simon was renamed Peter, he received when he became "a new creature in Christ"; and in telling the story St. Mark and St. Luke call him by his old name, thus drawing a kindly veil over the Apostle's shameful past. But the Apostle will have no concealment. He tells that he was himself that publican, even as afterwards in the catalogue of the Twelve (cf. Mt. x. 3; Mk. iii. 18; Lk. vi. 15), while the other Evangelists merely mention his name, he adds "the Publican," thus making himself of no reputation for the glory of his Saviour's grace. It is like that poignant sentence in Bunyan's preface to *The Jerusalem-Sinner Saved; or, Good News for the Vilest of Men*: "I have been vile myself, but have obtained mercy; and I would have my companions in sin partake of mercy too: and, therefore, I have writ this little book."

So far as the record goes, the call of Matthew seems strangely,

indeed incredibly sudden ; but though this is his first appearance in the Gospel-narrative, it was in no wise the first of his dealings with our Lord. It was hardly necessary for the Evangelist to recount the beginnings of the work of grace in the outcast's soul. He was a Jew ; and surely there were times when, even as he counted his gains or revelled with his boon-companions, he wistfully remembered the days of his youth and regretted his lost heritage of faith and love.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me
To walk together to the kirk,
With a goodly company !—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths, and maidens gay !

All this he had irrevocably forfeited, making himself an outcast from his people and his fathers' faith. But hope had revived in his breast when the Lord appeared at Capernaum, proclaiming " good news for the vilest of men." The door of the synagogue was indeed closed against him, but he would stand on the outskirts of the crowds which gathered round the Friend of publicans and sinners, and listen with kindling heart to His message of grace. Nor would his wistful face escape the observation of " those eyes of far perception." They read its secret ; and like many another outcast he found opportunity to kneel at those blessed feet and receive absolution from those gracious lips. On that day when the Master beckoned him from his place at the receipt of custom and claimed him for His service, he was already a disciple and had approved his devotion.

And no sooner was he called than he gave a fresh and truly heroic proof thereof. He " made Him," says St. Luke, " a great feast," literally " a great reception in his own house," inviting to it not only the other disciples, now his fellow Apostles, but a large company of " publicans and sinners," his former associates. It was his farewell to his old life, and he had them there that he might confess his Saviour before them and perhaps

win them also to faith. It was an ancient fashion, which survived as late as the seventeenth century, that on a great occasion a banquet-hall was open that any who would might witness the festivity and hear the table-talk; and among the spectators that evening were some Pharisees. It was in their judgment a scandal that our Lord should associate with those outcasts; and their insinuation was that He must have a secret liking for their ways. They durst not challenge Himself, but they made their protest to the disciples, and He overheard and answered it.

And what was His answer, His apologia for His crime of loving sinners? It was twofold. (1) He told them that therein He was fulfilling His mission. It was an ancient proverb that "a physician's business is with the sick," and Antisthenes the Cynic once quoted it when he was reproved for discoursing to a disreputable audience. "Physicians," he retorted, "deal with the sick, yet they have not the fever themselves." Even so our Lord here employs it; and how telling the argument is on His lips! For He was more than a philosopher. He was the Saviour, and therefore it was with sinners that He had to do; and the worse the sinners, the more He had to do with them, since they had the greater need of Him and He had the greater glory in saving them. "Physicians," says Bunyan, "get neither name nor fame by pricking of wheals, or picking out thistles, or by laying of plasters to the scratch of a pin; every old woman can do this." And (2) He told those Pharisees that, however they might censure it, His conduct was approved of God. Was it not proclaimed of old, in those Scriptures which they professed to revere, that "He desired mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos. vi. 6)? They were zealous for holiness, but had they laid that word of the prophet to heart, they would have understood what holiness truly means—a Godlike love which has "compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way."

QUESTION OF FASTING

ix. 14–17

14 *Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?*

15 *And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*

16 *No man putteth a piece of *new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.*

17 *Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.*

SOON after his recognition of our Lord as the Messiah whose coming he had been commissioned to announce, John the Baptist had been arrested and imprisoned by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee. It was an untoward event; for had he remained at liberty, he would surely have taken his place in the ranks of our Lord's followers and have brought his disciples with him. Some of the latter, including John, Andrew, and Simon (cf. Jo. i. 35–42), promptly took this momentous step; but his imprisonment deprived the rest of his counsel and guidance, and they continued their old allegiance. It is indeed no wonder that they hesitated; for there was much in our Lord's teaching and practice which puzzled them, especially His attitude toward the ancient Law and its ceremonial. The burthen of John's preaching had been repentance,

* Or, *raw*, or, *unwrought cloth.*

and he had naturally inculcated fasting; but this ordinance our Lord neither practised Himself nor required of His disciples, and moreover He poured scorn on the Pharisaic practice of it (cf. vi. 16–18).

Here those Pharisees whom He had encountered in Matthew's banquet-hall perceived an opportunity of avenging their discomfiture. It is written in our text that it was the disciples of John who thus questioned Him on His neglect of fasting; but according to St. Mark (cf. ii. 18) it was they and the Pharisees, whereas St. Luke has "they said unto Him" (v. 33), meaning, as the context shows, the Pharisees. Hence it appears that, while it was the disciples of John who approached Him and put the question to Him in all good faith, they had been instigated by the malicious Pharisees, who hoped to engage Him in a vexatious controversy and perhaps betray Him into an heretical pronouncement, thus exposing Himself to judicial proceedings.

It was in all good faith that they approached Him, and He received them kindly, listening to their question and graciously resolving their honest perplexity. First He reminded them of a saying of their Master just before his arrest (cf. Jo. iii. 29). When some of his disciples, jealous of his honour, resented the growing popularity of our Lord, John told them it was a joy to him that he was thus eclipsed by One greater than himself, One who was to him what the bridegroom was to the groomsman, whose office in those days was to superintend the bridal feast and present the bridegroom to the bride, rejoicing in his joy. Thus had their Master recognised the gladness of the new order inaugurated by the Saviour's advent; and surely it were unfitting that the company should mourn. The time for mourning would come all too soon, adds our Lord, foreseeing the tragic end.

It was a fatal blunder that those disciples of John were making in seeking to perpetuate the outworn usages of the past; and our Lord now illustrates it by two homely figures. (1) It was like the patching of an old garment with a piece of new or rather undressed, uncarded cloth: it is a manifest patch, "agreeing not with the old" (Lk. v. 36), and

> patches set upon a little breach
> Discredit more in hiding of the fault
> Than did the fault before it was so patch'd ;

and moreover, when it shrinks, it tears the old stuff and the rent is worse than ever. (2) It was like putting new wine into old bottles or rather, according to the ancient fashion, wine-skins, frushed with use : when the wine fermented, it would burst the brittle skins (cf. Josh. ix. 4). And so " new wine should be put into fresh, supple skins." Thus our Lord warns us against that spirit, prevalent in every age, which clings blindly to the dead past—the spirit which in the domain of theology would retain old-world definitions of the infinite and eternal truth, oblivious of the larger light ever breaking from the Word, and in the domain of statecraft resents the inevitable changes of a changeful world and by opposing reform precipitates revolution.

THE RULER'S DAUGHTER AND THE WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD

ix. 18–26

18 *While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.*

19 *And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.*

20 *And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:*

21 *For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.*

22 *But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.*

23 *And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,*

24 *He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.*

25 *But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.*

26 *And *the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.*

LIFE abounds in dramatic contrasts. Hardly had our Lord rid Himself of those malicious Pharisees when another of their order approached Him as a reverent suppliant. He was "a Ruler" or, as the other Evangelists more fully designate him, "a Ruler of the Synagogue," one of those dignitaries who accounted Him a heretic and were already displaying towards Him that animosity which grew more and

* Or, *this fame.*

more bitter to the tragic end. What had brought him thus humbly to the Lord's feet? "Perhaps," says Sir Walter, "the knowledge which causeth not to err is most frequently impressed upon the mind during seasons of affliction; and tears are the softened showers which cause the seed of Heaven to spring and take root in the human breast." So it was with this Ruler. The shadow of death was on his home, and his anguished heart turned to the only Helper.

Here, as in the story of the Centurion's Servant (cf. viii. 5–13), St. Matthew has abbreviated the narrative (cf. Mk. v. 21–43; Lk. viii. 40–56); and it will be well for us to postpone our study of both these incidents until we reach St. Mark's full presentation of them, merely observing meanwhile the reason of their abbreviation here. Our Lord had already wrought many miracles of healing, but this is His first miracle of raising from the dead; and the Evangelist, hastening to display the transcendent wonder, touches lightly upon preliminary and distracting details.

HEALING OF TWO BLIND MEN AND A DUMB

ix. 27–34

27 *And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.*

28 *And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.*

29 *Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.*

30 *And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.*

31 *But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.*

32 *As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.*

33 *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.*

34 *But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.*

ST. MARK and St. Luke tell that only the child's parents and the three most trusted of our Lord's disciples, Peter and James and John, witnessed the miracle, and that He bade them keep it secret; not permanently—for that was impossible—but until He had gone His way. The reason is plain. A crowd had followed Him to the Ruler's house, and they were awaiting Him in the street; and had the story gone abroad, it would have excited a frenzy of acclamation, an unprecedented outburst of that Messianic enthusiasm which so incensed the Jewish rulers against Him and, by reason of

its political implication, exposed Him to the suspicion of the Roman authorities. Therefore He desired to effect His departure as quietly as might be and gain the seclusion of His abode. It proved difficult ; for among the crowd were two blind men eager for healing, and on His emergence from the gateway of the Ruler's house they made their appeal. Bent on escaping, He paid no heed, but they held on, crying after Him " Have mercy on us, Son of David ! " They pursued Him thus to His door and pressed in after Him ; and then, fenced in from the multitude, He displayed the compassion which had been in His heart all the while. What though they shared the common notion of His Messiahship ? Their need was sore, and they had faith that He could help them ; and this is all that He asks. "All the fitness He requireth is—to feel your need of Him." They could not see His kind face, but they could feel His touch ; and He " touched "—literally " grasped " (the same word as in viii. 3, 15)—" their eyes," passing His hand over them with a soft caress. It is through faith that miracles are wrought (cf. xiii. 58) ; for faith is the opening of the soul to the Saviour's grace, and our faith is the measure of His operation. " If a man goeth to the ocean for water," says Bunyan in *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized*, " let him carry but an egg-shell with him, and with that he shall not bring a gallon home. Of old, beggars did use to carry their bowls in their laps, when they went to a door for an alms. Consequently, if their bowls were but little, they oft-times came off by the loss, though the charity of the giver was large. Yea, the greater the charity, the larger the loss, because the beggar's bowl was too little. Mark it well, it is oft-times thus in the matters of our God. Art thou a beggar, a beggar at God's door, be sure thou gettest a great bowl ; for as thy bowl is, so will be thy mess. ' According to thy faith,' saith he, ' be it unto thee.' "

The privacy which our Lord desired was denied Him. As He dismissed those two men rejoicing in the recovery of their sight, He found a band of suppliants at the door. They had brought an afflicted friend—" a dumb man possessed with a devil," which means that he was mentally defective. A curious crowd

had gathered, and with them a group of Pharisees. He healed the sufferer, and the chorus of adoration which arose exasperated the latter. Unable to question the miracle, but bent at all hazards on discrediting Him, they resorted to a dangerous calumny whereof they thenceforward made large use, ascribing His miraculous power to " black art."

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE TWELVE

ix. 35–x. 4

35 *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

36 *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they *fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

37 *Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;*

38 *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

1 *And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power †against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

2 *Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;*

3 *Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphæus, and Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus;*

4 *Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*

WHAT moved our Lord thus to withdraw from Capernaum and go on another mission through the inlands of Galilee? It was not alone that the Messianic enthusiasm excited by His miracles, especially the raising of the Ruler's child from the dead, meanwhile embarrassed His ministry in the town, but that the hostility of the Pharisees

*Or, *were tired and lay down.* † Or, *over.*

was a presage of the inevitable end, and since His time was short, He would make haste to extend His message as far as He might. And moreover He had in view a momentous departure. He had already chosen and ordained His Apostles, the comrades who were to aid Him in His ministry while He tarried on earth and continue it when He was gone; and it was time that they should address themselves to the work. He had been preparing them for it by the daily discipline of His example and precept; and He was watching for some stirring in their hearts of a desire to begin their high service. But a natural diffidence restrained them, and now in the course of this mission He emboldens them by a covert appeal. Wherever He went, He was encompassed by an eager multitude, some of them sick folk and feeble who needed healing, and some of them weary with travel since they had come far to see and hear Him. They were indeed a pitiful spectacle, and the Evangelist likens them, in the moving language of Holy Writ (cf. Num. xxvii. 17), to a flock of shepherdless sheep straying in the wilderness, "faint (properly "foot-sore with long travel") and scattered" or, as Wycliffe has it, "traveylide and lyggynge (lying down)." But it was not merely the piteousness of the spectacle that appealed to our Lord. He knew what had brought the multitude about Him. It was their sore need—their need of healing and the dumb yearning of their hungry souls for a message of peace and hope. And the need was universal. The world was one wide harvest-field awaiting the reapers. Alas that the reapers were so few and that any should be standing idle! "Pray ye therefore," said He significantly to the disciples, "the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth"—rather "that He cast forth (the same word as in x. 1; Mk. xi. 15) more labourers to His harvest." It was a plain challenge. If they were so moved by the world's need as to pray for it, then surely they would co-operate with God for the answering of their prayer, and cry with the prophet of old (Is. vi. 8) "Here am I; send me." The challenge was lost upon them, but the Lord would not be denied. "If we neglect our work," says Richard Baxter, "He hath a spur to quicken us"; and, since they would not

take His hint, He "cast them forth." He called them unto Him and gave them their commission.

The Apostles numbered twelve, corresponding perhaps to the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. xix. 28) to signify, since they were sent in the first instance to the Jewish people (cf. x. 5, 6, 23), the wideness of their mission. At any rate an even number was required, since they were sent forth "two by two" (cf. Mk. vi. 7) that they might cheer and support each other in their difficult and often perilous enterprise (cf. Eccl. iv. 9, 10). St. Matthew arranges them in pairs, doubtless as they went forth on their missions; and it is instructive to compare his catalogue with those of St. Mark (iii. 16–19) and St. Luke (vi. 14–16), and also with that which the latter gives in his Book of Acts (i. 13) with the traitor's place vacant.

St. Matthew	*St. Mark*	*St. Luke*
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew
James	John	James
John	Andrew	John
Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas
James son of Alphæus	James son of Alphæus	James son of Alphæus
Lebbæus (Thaddæus)	Thaddæus	Simon Zelotes
Simon the Cananite	Simon the Cananite	Judas son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot

1. The first pair are Simon or, as he was surnamed by the Lord on their first meeting at Bethabara (cf. Jo. i. 42), Peter, in Aramaic Cephas, "the Rock," and his brother Andrew. Their father's name was John (cf. Jo. xxi. 15–17 R.V.; Mt. xvi. 17), and they were fishermen at Bethsaida, the harbour of Capernaum (cf. Jo. i. 44; Mt. iv. 18). Peter was "the chief" of the Twelve; for so "the first" here signifies, being the same word which St. Paul employs when he calls himself "the chief" of sinners (1 Tim. i. 15). What entitled him to this pre-eminence, so grievously misconstrued by mediæval ecclesiasticism? (1) It was in the first instance the pre-eminence of seniority, since he was evidently the oldest of the Twelve. He was, so far as

the record shows, the only married man among them (cf. Mt. viii. 14). (2) He had that quality of generous impetuosity which always wins affection though often incurring blame; and St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine touch the secret of his pre-eminence when they observe that, if John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (cf. Jo. xix. 26; xxi. 7, 20), Peter was the disciple who loved Jesus. The justice of the distinction appears when it is understood that in this designation of John "love" is in the original that word which properly denotes not "affection" but "regard" or "esteem" (cf. exposition of v. 44). In one instance indeed (Jo. xx. 2) the warmer word is used, but there it refers not to John alone but to Peter also: "Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved—who was dear to Jesus." Of all the Twelve Peter and John were dearest to the Master. He *loved* them both, but John was "the disciple whom He *regarded*." He could trust him, could make him His confidant, sure of his discretion; whereas Peter was all impulse, "always," in St. Chrysostom's phrase, "leaping before the others," quick to pour out the affection of his heart but apt also to "speak unadvisedly with his lips" and be betrayed into infidelities which presently cost him bitter shame. (3) Here lies another and perhaps the principal reason of his pre-eminence. What says St. Paul after confessing himself "the chief of sinners"? "For this cause," he proceeds (1 Tim. i. 16), "I obtained mercy, that in me" not "first" but "as the chief Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him." It was because he had been "the chief of sinners" that St. Paul was a pattern of the Saviour's grace; and even so Peter who had denied the Master was "the chief of His Apostles." "I heard once," says Bunyan, "a story from a soldier, who, with his company, had laid siege against a fort, that so long as the besieged were persuaded their foes would show them no favour, they fought like madmen; but when they saw one of their fellows taken, and received to favour, they all came tumbling down from their fortress and delivered themselves into their enemies' hands." Even such was Peter's testimony. "Behold me," said he, in Bunyan's language, to all who knew his story, "all you that are

men and women of a low and timorous spirit, you whose hearts are narrow, for that you never had the advantage to know, because your sins are few, the largeness of the grace of God. Behold, I say, in me, the exceeding riches of his grace! I am a pattern set forth before your faces, on whom you may look and take heart."

The main interest of the scanty references to Andrew in the Gospel-story is the affection which they evince between him and his brother Simon, evidently his elder brother. He was the first to make the Lord's acquaintance at Bethabara (cf. Jo. i. 40–42), and it was characteristic of him that he hastened to his brother to tell him of the discovery which he had made and bring him to the Saviour. They worked together as fishermen (cf. Mt. iv. 18), and they also lived together (cf. Mk. i. 29) in that hospitable dwelling which not only sheltered Simon's wife and her mother but would seem to have been the home of our Lord while He sojourned at Capernaum. It was fitting that they should be comrades in their evangelic missions; and they both were privileged to win the martyr's crown. Both were crucified, Peter (cf. Jo. xxi. 18, 19) at Rome under Nero on the selfsame day, it is said, when St. Paul was beheaded there, and Andrew, according to tradition, at Patræ in Achaia.

2. The brothers James and John had also been fishermen, working with their father Zebedee (Hebr. *Zabdai*) and evidently in a somewhat large way, since they employed several "hired servants" (cf. Mt. iv. 22). Their mother was Salome, and since she was a sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord (cf. Mt. xxvii. 56; Mk. xv. 4; Jo. xix. 25), they were His cousins according to the flesh. She was not only a devoted disciple but a clever and withal ambitious woman (cf. Mt. xx. 20, 21); and it was doubtless from her that they inherited the hot temper which they displayed in their early days (cf. ix. 52–55), and which moved the Lord to bestow upon them in playful admonition the sobriquet of *Boanerges*, "Sons of Thunder" (Mk. iii. 17). They were intellectually the most distinguished of the Twelve. Unhappily the career of James, the elder brother, was cut short by his martyrdom in the persecution under Herod Agrippa in the year 44 (cf. Ac. xii. 1, 2); but John

continued to extreme old age, and at the close of his long ministry at Ephesus enriched the Church with his precious Gospel. It is an evidence that James was equally endowed that he was admitted with his brother and Peter to a peculiar intimacy with the Master (cf. Mk. v. 37, ix. 2, xiv. 33), an intimacy which Andrew also latterly shared (cf. Mk. xiii. 3).

3. Philip and Bartholomew. Outside the catalogues of the Twelve Philip's name is nowhere mentioned by the Synoptic Evangelists ; but somewhat is told of him in the Fourth Gospel, nothing indeed distinguished or heroic but enough to reveal his worth and amiability. He belonged, like Peter and Andrew, to Bethsaida, the harbour of Capernaum, being no doubt, like them, a fisherman, and like them too he met the Lord at Bethabara (cf. Jo. i. 43, 44). Evidently he was a close friend of Andrew (cf. vi. 5–9 ; xii. 21, 22), kindly yet shy and withal somewhat slow of understanding (cf. xiv. 8, 9). All manner of gifts are serviceable to the Kingdom of Heaven, and since Philip had an aptitude for practical affairs, he was employed as purveyor to the company of the Apostles (cf. vi. 5–7).

Philip's comrade was Bartholomew, and outside the catalogues of the Twelve this name never occurs in all the New Testament. It is not really a name but the Greek form of an Aramaic patronymic—*Bar Talmai*, " the son of Talmai " ; and there is much probability in the suggestion that he was none other than that singularly interesting disciple who appears in the Fourth Gospel as Nathanael of Cana of Galilee. Nathanael was a friend of Philip, who introduced him to the Lord on the road from Bethabara to the wedding at Cana (cf. i. 45–51) ; and it at least suggests that he was one of the Twelve that he is found in that band of Apostles who met the Risen Lord by the Lake of Galilee (cf. xxi. 2). It would sufficiently account for his general designation by his patronymic that Nathanael (" God hath given ") and Matthew (" the Gift of the Lord ") both corresponded to the Greek name Theodore, and thus there was need of discrimination.

4. Thomas and Matthew. Thomas also is not really a proper name but, as St. John is careful to mention (cf. xi. 16,

xxi. 2 R.V. marg.), an epithet signifying "the Twin," in Greek *Didymus*. On the testimony of the historian Eusebius his name was Judas; and it accounts for its disuse in his case that not only were there two others of the Twelve who bore it but as the name of the traitor it was odious in the Church. It is to the Fourth Gospel (cf. xi. 16; xiv. 5; xx. 24-29; xxi. 2) that we owe all our knowledge of this Apostle—his proneness to despondency and withal his rare devotion: his readiness, while seeing the worst, to face it for the Master's sake when others would have held back. Was it because the shame of his past wrought in Matthew the Publican a spirit of meekness that the Lord associated him with one whose querulousness must have made him a difficult comrade?

5. James the son of Alphæus and Lebbæus. To distinguish him from the brother of John this James is styled "the son of Alphæus" and elsewhere also (cf. Mk. xv. 40 R.V. marg.) "the Less" or rather "the Little," signifying not inferiority of prestige but smallness of stature. His mother's name was Mary, and she had another son named Joses who also was a disciple; and if his father Alphæus or, as the Aramaic name *Chalpai* was otherwise transliterated, Clopas (cf. Jo. xix. 25 R.V.), was identical with the father of Levi the Publican (cf. Mk. ii. 14), then he was Matthew's brother; and tradition has it that he too had been a publican.

And what of his comrade, who is styled in our text Lebbæus or alternatively Thaddæus? The latter is his designation in St. Mark, and St. Luke calls him "Judas the son of James," not, as our Version has it, "the brother of James," identifying him with Judas, "the brother of our Lord" (cf. Mt. xiii. 55; Jude 1)—an impossible notion, since none of His "brethren" believed in Him during His lifetime (cf. Jo. vii. 5). Nothing is recorded of this Apostle save that puzzled question of his in the Upper Room (cf. Jo. xiv. 22), which shows that like the rest he still cherished the Jewish idea of the Kingdom of Heaven as a kingdom of this world. There is, however, a testimony to the graciousness of his character in those epithets by which he went among his comrades—Lebbæus, which signifies "hearty" or "cordial," contrasting him with the pessimistic Judas the

Twin, and Thaddæus, perhaps "affectionate," with the cold, selfish Iscariot.

6. Simon the Cananite and Judas Iscariot. The epithet "Cananite" was variously misconstrued by our earlier versions. The Authorised Version, following the Bishops' Bible, has "Canaanite," making Simon a heathen like "the woman of Canaan" (Mt. xv. 22), "a Syrophœnician by nation" (Mk. vii. 26); while Tyndale, Coverdale, and the Great Bible have "Simon of Cane" or "Cana." The word is "Cananite" or "Cananæan" (R.V.), which is the Aramaic of the Greek *Zelotes* or Zealot (Lk. vi. 15). And who were the Zealots? They were the political extremists of the Pharisaic party—desperate patriots who advocated open rebellion against the Roman conqueror and were the ringleaders of every insurrection. His comrade was another Judas, styled Iscariot to distinguish him from Judas the Twin and Judas Lebbæus. Iscariot was a local designation, meaning "the Man of Kerioth," a village in the south of Judæa; and since it was borne also by his father before him (cf. Jo. vi. 71, xiii. 26 R.V.), it indicates hereditary proprietorship. The traitor was the only Judæan and the only man of worldly station among the Twelve. The rest were peasants of despised Galilee.

Observe (1) what diversities of character and ideal were comprehended in the little company of our Lord's Apostles. It included, for example, at least two publicans and one Zealot; and how far asunder in personal sentiment and popular esteem were those hirelings of the heathen tyrant and that ardent patriot! Yet they realised their brotherhood in the fellowship of the Divine Reconciler. And (2) all the Apostles were young men. The Lord was as a father among them. "Little children," said He in the Upper Room (Jo. xiii. 33, xiv. 18 R.V. marg.), "I will not leave you orphans." And when He spoke thus, He was but three and thirty years of age. Few old men welcomed the Saviour's message. Nicodemus was an old man, and how slow he was to believe! Habit is a fetter which is hard to break. "Nearly all men," wrote Darwin, "past a moderate age, either in actual years or in mind, are, I am fully convinced, incapable of looking at facts under a new point of view."

THEIR COMMISSION (x. 5–42)

1. *THEIR PROCEDURE*

x. 5–15

5 *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:*

6 *But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

7 *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

8 *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

9 **Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses.*

10 *Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet †staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.*

11 *And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.*

12 *And when ye come into an house, salute it.*

13 *And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.*

14 *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.*

15 *Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city.*

OBSERVE the significance of our Lord's initial limitation of their mission to "the house of Israel." It is a striking evidence of His universal grace and His ultimate intention that His Gospel should be proclaimed to all mankind. For, since the Apostles were Jews, nurtured in contempt for

* Or, *Get.* † Gr. *a staff.*

the Gentiles and hatred of their half-heathen neighbours the Samaritans, the idea of preaching to them would never have entered into their minds had He not set them the example of compassion for those outcasts (cf. Jo. iv. 39–42). He limited their mission at the outset to the Holy Land since its soil had been providentially prepared for the reception of "the good seed of the Kingdom"; and once it had been planted and taken root there, it would spread and cover the earth. The time would come for them to carry His message abroad, but the time was not yet. First things first. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," was His charge, "among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*" (cf. Lk. xxiv. 47; Ac. i. 8).

They were His fellow-workers, and He commissioned them to do such works as they had seen Him do, not only preaching but working miracles; and as He in the days of His flesh wrought His miracles by the Spirit of God (cf. Mt. xii. 28; Jo. xiv. 10), so they wrought theirs in His name (cf. Ac. iii. 6, 16, iv. 10). God wrought in Him and He wrought in them. It is beyond question that the primitive Church was endowed with miraculous gifts. The primary evidence is the personal and direct testimony of the Apostles. St. Paul, for example, repeatedly affirms it in his epistles, and always as a recognised fact, familiar to his readers (cf. 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Gal. iii. 5). It was a temporary endowment, but it did not forthwith disappear with the departure of the original Apostles. It gradually diminished until in the fourth century, as St. Chrysostom certifies at the beginning of his fourth Homily on the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, it had quite vanished; but, on the testimony of St. Justin Martyr and St. Irenæus, it still persisted in the second century and, on the testimony of Tertullian, lingered into the third. Its cessation was not due to the Church's loss of spiritual contact with her Risen Lord. It so happened according to the purpose of God; for the gift was in the first instance a providential dispensation, and it ceased when it had served its end. "Why," was a common question in St. Augustine's day as in our own, "are those miracles which, you declare, were wrought then, never wrought now?" "I might answer," said he, "that they were necessary

ere the world believed, to the end that it might believe. Whoso still seeks for prodigies that he may believe is himself a great prodigy in that, while the world believes, he does not." This is indeed most true and reasonable, yet it is neither the whole truth nor the sole reason. The apostolic gift of miracles was not merely a providential dispensation, demonstrating the divine origin of the Gospel: it was an inevitable concomitant of the inauguration of a new and higher spiritual order, and the natural order furnishes analogies. For instance, the normal process there is evolution, but there are points where science perforce recognises interruptions thereof, chiefly the appearance of life. The materialistic theory was "spontaneous generation," but exhaustive experiment has established the old principle *Omne vivum ex vivo*, "the living always springs from the living." Life is not evolved from inanimate matter, and its appearance on the earth was a supernatural interposition. Imagine what a stir it would occasion—the unprecedented phenomena of the growth of vegetation and the movement of sentient and conscious things in a hitherto arid and dead domain. It was a dislocation of the natural order, but the dislocation was but temporary; for the law of evolution persisted, and presently all nature, animate and inanimate, fell under its sway. And even so it happened at the Incarnation when a Divine Life interposed in the natural order. It occasioned a temporary dislocation, but the new forces and the old presently coalesced in a larger and nobler cosmos, and the beneficence of the Glorified Saviour is operating evermore ceaselessly and silently, the most potent factor in the order of the world.

The Apostles were to go on their journeys absolutely unprovided. Observe here two instructive discrepancies in the parallel reports. (1) St. Matthew (cf. Lk. xxii. 35) has "nor scrip"—an old word for "wallet" or "pouch" (cf. Chaucer, *Somnours Tale*, 1737: "with scrippe and tipped staf, y-tukked hye"; Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III. ii. 170: "though not with bag and baggage, yet with scrip and scrippage")—"neither two coats"—rather "tunics" or "vests" (cf. exposition of v. 40)—"neither shoes"; St. Mark has (vi. 9) "but *shod with sandals*." There is really no discrepancy here;

for shoes were the comfortable footwear of luxurious folk, especially in winter. These the Lord forbade His Apostles; but He did not mean them to go barefoot: they were to wear sandals. (2) St. Matthew (cf. Lk. ix. 3) has "nor yet staves," or according to the best authorities "nor a staff" (R.V.); whereas St. Mark has (vi. 8) "nothing save a staff only," meaning that, for the better prosecution of their journeys, even as they should wear sandals to protect their feet from the roughness of the road, so they should carry staves to support them on the way. The obliteration of this significant exception in the reports of St. Matthew and St. Luke exemplifies the sort of modification to which the sacred text was liable, especially in early days when there were as yet no written Gospels and the story was orally transmitted.

The reason why they should make no provision for their journeys was that they needed none. Like the Master (cf. Lk. viii. 3) they would be ministered unto by those whom their message blessed. It was not charity but a well merited requital, and they must claim it as the workman claims his wage, recognising that therein they conferred a privilege—the sacred privilege of serving the Kingdom of Heaven. Observe the practical wisdom of our Lord's counsel here. The privilege of entertaining the heralds of His Kingdom must not be injudiciously conferred. Whatever place they visited, they should "enquire" or rather "search out (R.V.), make a searching inquiry, who in it was worthy," meaning that for the credit of their message their entertainer should be a person of good character in the community. And once they found one of this description, they must remain with him all the time of their stay in that place and in no wise vex him by removing to another house where perhaps they might enjoy more luxurious entertainment. In all circumstances they must exhibit a spirit of kindly courtesy. They were indeed conferring a privilege on their entertainer, but it must be graciously conferred. They must enter his house with a benediction on their lips: *Shalom lakhem*, "Peace to this house," *Pax vobiscum*. And what if they were churlishly received? Then that house would miss the benediction. It was customary for a Jew who had been abroad,

on reaching the frontier of the Holy Land to shake from his feet the dust of the unhallowed territory where he had been travelling ; and even so, wherever they were ill received, should the Apostles " shake off the dust of their feet " (cf. Ac. xiii. 50, 51), proclaiming those unbelievers no better than heathen.

2. *PERSECUTION IN STORE*

x. 16–23

16 *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and *harmless as doves.*

17 *But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;*

18 *And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.*

19 *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*

20 *For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*

21 *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.*

22 *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

23 *But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not †have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

IT was a stern ordeal that awaited the Apostles, and lest they should be taken by surprise and lose heart, the Master plainly forewarns them. They must lay their account for opposition and persecution. He was sending them forth, says He in proverbial phrase, "as sheep in the midst of wolves"; and they would have need of two qualities—"the wisdom" or rather "prudence (cf. vii. 24) of the serpent" and "the harmlessness" or rather "simplicity (R.V.) of the

* Or, *simple.* † Or, *end*, or, *finish.*

dove." Neither by itself is good, since mere prudence is the quality of a trickster and mere simplicity of a fool; but their union is excellent. Most justly does Thackeray characterise a gentleman as one "whose want of measures makes him simple." He has the simplicity of the dove, yet withal, by very reason of his simplicity, "the eye of the serpent," quick, keen, alert to detect duplicity and shun its snares.

The ensuing verses (17–22) are given by St. Mark (xiii. 9–13) and St. Luke (xxi. 12–17) in their reports of our Lord's discourse on things to come on the night before His arrest; and that is plainly their fitting place, since they are concerned with the persecutions which the Apostles would encounter in preaching to the heathen (cf. ver. 18), and at present He has in view their immediate mission to "the house of Israel." Limited though it was, that mission was large and demanded all the time at their disposal. See how He expresses this: "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come." As Jonathan Edwards observed long ago in his *History of Redemption*, this phrase "the coming of the Lord" is employed in the New Testament in a variety of connections. It denotes, in the first instance, the Incarnation, His coming as the Saviour promised of old to redeem the world by His Infinite Sacrifice; and then that final consummation, "the revelation," as St. Paul terms it (Rom. ii. 5), "of the righteous judgment of God," when He will be manifested in glory to right all wrong and vindicate God's historic providence which is meanwhile so dark and mysterious. Just as Israel waited long for His first appearing and oftentimes it seemed as though the promise had failed, so ever since His departure the Church has been looking for the blessed hope of His reappearing, and too often, as happened at Thessalonica in St. Paul's day, in her impatience she has bewildered herself by foolish and truly faithless speculations.

It would deliver us from this snare if we considered the blessed truth which the New Testament proclaims that, though our Lord has passed from our mortal sight, He has not forsaken the world for which He died. He is ever with us according to His own word (cf. Mt. xviii. 20, xxviii. 20); and in two ways He is continually manifesting His power and

glory, His sovereignty and His mindfulness of His promise and purpose, and these manifestations are styled in the New Testament "comings of the Lord." (1) Remember His word of cheer to the Eleven on the night of His betrayal (Jo. xiv. 1–3): "Let not your heart be troubled. I come again, and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." It was death that was taking Him from them, and their comfort was that by and by they would follow Him on the same dark road, and they would find Him waiting for them at the end of it to bid them welcome to His Blessed Home. And thus, however remote may be the Final Consummation, "the Coming of the Lord" is very near and daily nearer for us all. "Suppose," says St. Chrysostom, "the Consummation be twenty or thirty or a hundred years hence: what is this to us? The end of the life of each of us is an image of the Consummation." (2) The course of history is the working out of God's purpose, and in scriptural parlance any startling occurrence interrupting the even tenor of events and disclosing to a heedless world the Awful Presence "behind the dim unknown," where "standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own," is a "coming of the Lord."

It is in this last sense that the phrase is employed in the passage before us. In those momentous days when Israel's Saviour was in her midst and she knew Him not, the supreme tragedy of her long and troubled history was looming on the horizon, visible to every eye which could read the signs of the times—the stern chastisement which imperial Rome, exasperated by the nation's incessant turbulence, would surely inflict upon her. It came to pass some forty years later when the army of Titus laid siege to Jerusalem, laid her in ruins, and scattered the remnant of her people homeless wanderers over the face of the earth. It was a direct and natural consequence of their rejection of our Lord; for, as Josephus justly observes, it was their secular ideal of the Messiah as an earthly king that inspired their hope of a national restoration and incited them to desperate rebellion. It would have dispelled that wild dream had they recognised our Lord as their Messiah, truly "the King of Israel" but another sort of King than they imagined,

One whose Kingdom is not of this world and whose throne is in the hearts of men. It was her rejection of our Lord that sealed the nation's doom ; and the spectacle of the people whom He loved hastening blindly to their ruin grieved Him to the heart and brought tears to His eyes (cf. Lk. xix. 41–44). O that they would even now, ere it was too late, recognise the things which belonged to their peace and know the time of their visitation ! He had come to them in mercy ; and unless they received Him, He must come to them in judgment. Thus yearning over them He bade His Apostles hasten on their mission and ere the storm broke address an urgent appeal to the cities of Israel, in the hope that even yet they might be saved.

3. *THEIR COMFORT THEREIN*

x. 24–31

24 *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.*

25 *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house* **Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*

26 *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

27 *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*

28 *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

29 *Are not two sparrows sold for a* †*farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.*

30 *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

31 *Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

WHATEVER of calumny or wrong they might encounter in the prosecution of their mission, they had two uplifting consolations:

1. The comradeship of their Lord—their Teacher and Master (vers. 24–27). They were suffering not merely for Him but with Him. And would they have it otherwise?

> What matter if we live
> A little woe-begone, when He hath passed
> Patiently all our path, changing its stones
> To rubies, and to rose blooms all its thorns,
> With bright blood of His vainly-wounded feet?

* Gr. *Beelzebul.*

† It is in value half-penny farthing in the original, as being the tenth part of the Roman penny.

He had been preparing them for the ordeal all these bygone days. The high truths which He had revealed to them in the seasons of communion when He took them apart to the mountainside or talked with them in the privacy of their dwellings, were no secret lore but a message for the world, which now they must fearlessly proclaim.

2. God's fatherly love and care (vers. 28–31). The worst that their persecutors could do was to kill their bodies. Have no fear of them, says our Lord; fear only "him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (R.V. marg; cf. v. 22, 29). It is generally supposed that it is God that our Lord here means, but surely it is rather the Devil. For (1) God is not the Destroyer; He is the Saviour and Preserver of men (cf. Lk. ix. 56), and their destruction is the malign office of the Devil, who is hence styled Apollyon, i.e., "the Destroyer" (Rev. ix. 11). It is indeed written in the Epistle of St. James (iv. 12) that "there is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy"; but it is sin and sin alone that He destroys. It is never said in the New Testament that He destroys the soul nor yet that He destroys the body; for soul and body, as the Christian hope of the Resurrection proclaims, are alike precious to Him. It is indeed said that He destroys "the flesh," but "the flesh" is not synonymous with "the body": it signifies, in New Testament phraseology, our corrupted nature, and when He "destroys the flesh," it is "that the spirit may be saved" (1 Cor. v. 5). It is in this sense that St. James speaks of God as "saving and destroying"; and to fancy that when our Lord bids us "fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body," He means God is to make Him contradict the constant teaching of the New Testament and ascribe to God what is elsewhere defined as the work of the Devil. Precisely this, on the Christian view, is the essential difference between God and the Devil—that the latter is the destroyer of soul and body, while God is the Saviour of both. (2) Our Lord's meaning is determined by St. Luke's report of the saying, as rightly rendered in the margin of the Revised Version (Lk. xii. 5): "Fear him which after he hath killed *hath authority* to cast into Gehenna." The significant fact is that, wherever the

phrase occurs, it is implied that the authority has been received. It is a delegated authority like that which our Lord gave to His Apostles (cf. Mt. x. 1; Mk. iii. 15, vi. 7; Lk. ix. 1, x. 19). And so says our Lord (Jo. x. 18): "I have authority to lay down My life, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father." "Knowest thou not," says Pontius Pilate, the plenipotentiary of the Emperor (Jo. xix. 10), "that I have authority to release thee, and have authority to crucify thee?" Saul of Tarsus again "had authority from the Chief Priests to bind all that called on the Lord's name" (Ac. ix. 14). And St. Paul claims (1 Cor. ix. 4, 5), that, like the rest of the Apostles, he "had authority" to eat and drink and lead about a wife. God *gives* authority, He does not *receive* it; and since it is a delegated authority that is denoted by the phrase "him which hath authority," the reference is not to God. It is the Devil that our Lord means —a rebel angel, the enemy and destroyer of the souls and bodies which God created and which are dear and precious in His sight. He could not have spoken thus of God, whom He always represents as our Heavenly Father, loving us and seeking our salvation to the last; and that reference were here peculiarly incongruous. How could He have said in one breath "Fear God, lest He kill your body and cast you into Gehenna" and "Fear not, for God is the sparrow's friend, and ye are of more value than many sparrows"? It is the Devil that He bids us fear—not God, who is our Father and Friend and claims our trust; and only as we recognise this do we perceive the force of His appeal. He is challenging our manhood and charging us to be true at all hazards to the best and highest. "Care not," says He, "what your persecutors may say or do. Fear nothing but a base and cowardly surrender to the Devil."

Our inspiration is the thought of God's fatherly love and care. His tender mercies are over all His works, even the least of His creatures. "Are not two sparrows sold for a ha'penny (cf. marg.)?" St. Luke (xii. 6) has "Are not five sparrows sold for two ha'pence?" and the variation is very significant. Sparrows were eaten by poor folk, and they were the cheapest of birds in the market. The price was a ha'penny

for a pair or, on the principle of our "baker's dozen," two ha'pence for five, and the phrases were proverbial of something little worth. Our Lord might use either, and no doubt He used both on different occasions. "Are not five sparrows sold for two ha'pence? and one of them"—even the odd one thrown into the bargain—"shall not fall on the ground without your Father." Observe the argument. If God cares for the meanest of His creatures, and if, as the Spanish proverb has it, "a leaf stirs not on the tree without His will," then "there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow." And we are more to Him than sparrows. "The very hairs of your head," says our Lord, quoting a Hebrew proverb (cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 11), "are all numbered." Whatever befalls us is our Father's appointment, serving some good unperceived by us meanwhile; and wherefore should we fear it?

It shall not cause me any alarm,
For neither so comes the bird to harm,
Seeing our Father, Thou hast said,
Is by the sparrow's dying bed;
Therefore it is a blessed place,
And the sparrow in high grace.

It cometh therefore to this, Lord:
I have considered Thy word,
And henceforth will be Thy bird.

4. *A CHALLENGE TO HEROISM*

x. 32–39

32 *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

33 *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

34 *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

35 *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*

36 *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

37 *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

38 *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

39 *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

IT was, our Lord repeats, a stern and cruel ordeal that awaited His Apostles. No high cause, however holy and beneficent, is ever won without conflict, and in proclaiming His Gospel of love and peace they would encounter fierce and bitter enmity. They would have to face that sorest anguish, the estrangement of friends and kindred, and choose between the dear affections of home and loyalty to Him. It would be a hard test of their devotion, and He sets before them three appealing incentives: (1) As they confessed or denied Him, so would He confess or deny them before God. "It is the end that crowns the work"; and would they purchase present ease at the cost of eternal

shame? (2) It was for their sakes that He was taking the hard road which ended at the Cross; and would they shrink from following Him?

Must Jesus bear the Cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me.

The consecrated cross I'll bear,
Till death shall set me free;
And then go home my crown to wear,
For there's a crown for me.

And (3) a recreant, says our Lord, in the language of a general to his troops on the eve of battle, loses his life in finding it, and a hero finds his life in losing it.

Fear, and be slain; no worse can come to fight:
And fight and die is death destroying death;
Where fearing dying pays death servile breath.

5. *THE REWARD OF THEIR FELLOW-SUFFERERS*

x. 40–42

40 *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

41 *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.*

42 *And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

IT was a cruel aggravation of the distress of the proscribed preachers in "the Killing Times" that all who listened to them or ministered to their need, were it only by "giving a cup of cold water to one of these little ones," these broken men so "small and despised" in the world's sight, were exposed to savage vengeance, like that Eskdale widow who, for harbouring a dying outlaw, had her poor home wrecked by the dragoons and her eldest son shot on the moor. It was a bitter thought to those devoted men, tempting them, if aught could, to disloyalty to Christ's Crown and Covenant. Our Lord Himself experienced a like grief when on His account the Chief Priests plotted the death of His friend Lazarus (Jo. xii. 10, 11), and again at His arrest in Gethsemane when He interceded for the Eleven: "If ye seek Me, let these go their way" (xviii. 8). Knowing how the hearts of His Apostles would be torn by the sufferings of their converts for the Gospel's sake and how they might be tempted to wish that they had held their peace, He here bids them take a wider and juster view. It was not on their account that their friends would suffer; for it was not their own message that they would proclaim. It was His

message; and it was in Him and not in them that their converts believed. They were His witnesses, and in preaching the Gospel they called men to share their faith in the Saviour and the Father whom He revealed, and tread with them the hard yet glorious pathway to Heaven.

A DEPUTATION FROM JOHN THE BAPTIST (xi. 1–19)

1. *HIS QUESTION*

xi. 1–6

1 *And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.*

2 *Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,*

3 *And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*

4 *Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:*

5 *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

6 *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

THUS commissioned the Twelve set forth on their several missions, and our Lord was prosecuting alone His itinerant ministry of preaching and healing (cf. ix. 35) when this incident occurred (cf. Lk. vii. 18–35). Over a year ago the Baptist had been arrested by Herod Antipas. A prisoner in the Castle of Machærûs on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, he had been constantly informed by his disciples of the course of events; and a doubt had arisen in his mind, strengthening as the months passed. He heard of the doings of our Lord, "the works of the Christ" (R.V.), i.e., the Messiah; and they were not the sort of works which he had expected. What did he expect? He entertained indeed a larger ideal of the Messiah than his Jewish contemporaries; for he conceived Him in the first instance as a mighty reformer, axe and winnowing-fan in

hand, hewing down abuses and purging the national life (cf. Mt. iii. 12), and then as "the Lamb of God" (cf. Jo. i. 29, 36), a sacrificial victim. What puzzled him was that, as it seemed, our Lord was performing neither rôle. He was not assailing the abuses of His age but preaching a gracious message of a Heavenly Father's love. Neither was He braving persecution, imprisonment, and death; for those were the days of His popularity, and though the rulers were increasingly hostile, He was as yet the hero of the multitude. Hence John's perplexity. Could it be that he had erred in taking our Lord for the Promised Saviour and so announcing Him at Bethabara? It was a distressful misgiving, and to settle it "he sent two of his disciples." The true reading here is "he sent by his disciples" (R.V.), making them his deputies, since he could not himself stir abroad; but in fact he sent two—"certain two of his disciples," as St. Luke says (vii. 19 R.V. marg.), meaning two whom he deemed most suitable for the errand. They propounded his question: "Art Thou the Coming One (a Jewish designation of the Messiah), or are we to look for another?"

And what answer did our Lord return? He made no claim; He presented no argument appealing, as He well might, to the testimony of the prophetic Scriptures in proof that He was indeed the Saviour prefigured of old. At the moment He seemed to ignore their appeal. They had found Him busy healing sick folk, and He continued His gracious work; and then He turned to them. "Go," said He, "and tell" rather "report to John the things which ye hear and see"—the fame of the miracles which he had hitherto wrought and its corroboration by these which they had just witnessed. Such were the works which He was doing, and their master would judge for himself whether they were "the works of the Messiah" or no. They might not be the sort of works which he had expected, but they were the sort which the Scriptures had foretold (cf. Is. xxxv. 5, 6, lxi. 1); and it is the mark of an earnest and honest mind that it is ever ready to revise its prejudications and acknowledge the truth. "Blessed is he, whosoever will find no stumbling-block in Me." This is our Lord's answer to the Baptist's question—a challenge to unprejudiced consideration of the evidence before him.

It was always thus that He presented His claims, and it is thus that He would have His witnesses present them in every generation. "As a rule," wrote R. H. Hutton, "the most depressing and disheartening of all religious literature is the apologetic literature. If I wished to doubt the possibility of a revelation, I should take a course of reading in defence of it." It is not argument that wins men to faith, "leaving," as it does, "for one doubt it takes away, suggestion of a score." It is a vision of His grace, and the one incontrovertible and compelling evidence is the testimony of a soul that knows Him and lives His life in the sight of the world.

Oh, times of weak and wavering faith
That labour pleas in His defence,
Ye only dim Him with your breath:
He is His own best evidence.

2. *OUR LORD'S VINDICATION OF JOHN*

xi. 7–15

7 *And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?*

8 *But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses.*

9 *But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.*

10 *For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

11 *Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

12 *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven *suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

13 *For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*

14 *And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*

15 *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

THE crowd, including, as St. Luke indicates (cf. vii. 30), some Pharisees and Scribes, had followed the interview with lively interest, and they were judging the Baptist with that ungenerosity which is the wonted meed of a fallen hero. Our Lord knew their thoughts; He heard their sneers and read their faces; and He addressed to them an indignant remonstrance. What were the censures which they were whispering? One was that John was, in proverbial phrase, "a reed shaken with the wind"—a vacillating waverer, doubting to-day what he had believed yesterday. Another was that he was but a

* Or, *is gotten by force, and they that thrust men.*

weakling, tamed by a few months' imprisonment and ready now, like any supple and luxurious courtier, to quail before the tyrant. And another was that he was no prophet, or he would have known certainly whether Jesus were the Messiah. And what says our Lord? He tells them that herein it was not John that they were condemning but themselves. It was not so that they had accounted him in those days when they trooped to Bethabara and hung upon his impassioned lips. Remembering him as they had known him then, could they now pronounce him a waverer or a coward or doubt whether he were a prophet? Indeed he was more than a prophet. For the prophets had merely dreamed of the Coming One and seen Him by faith afar off; but John was His Herald according to the Scriptures (cf. Mal. iii. 1), realising in good truth the fancy of the Jews in those later days (cf. exposition of iii. 1–12) that on the eve of the Messiah's Advent the ancient prophet Elijah would reappear and prepare the nation to receive Him. What prophet, what mortal man had ever played a part like his?

"Notwithstanding," adds our Lord, "he that is least" rather "one who is but little in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." And He proceeds to explain what it was that so limited the Baptist's greatness. As it stands in our text, His pronouncement (vers. 12, 13) is difficult of interpretation; but it is happily elucidated by St. Luke (cf. xvi. 16), none the less clearly that he has preserved it in a group of memorable sayings of our Lord detached from their historical connection. It appears that, as frequently happened in the transcription of the sacred text, these two verses have been transposed, and the passage should read: "For all the Prophets and the Law were until John; but ever since the days of John the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" rather "hath been being stormed, and stormers have been plundering it" or, in Wycliffe's phrase, "ravishing it" (the word rendered "catcheth" in Jo. x. 12)—a vivid metaphor of a town stormed and pillaged. See what this means. The ancient dispensation of the Law and the Prophets had continued until John's day; and he, as the Herald of the Messiah, had ushered in the Kingdom of Heaven. Unhappily he had misconceived that Kingdom,

picturing the Messiah as an indignant and ruthless national reformer; and his preaching had fanned the flame of revolutionary ardour. According to Josephus it was the fear of his exciting a rebellion that prompted Herod Antipas to arrest the Baptist and cast him into prison; and though, as the Evangelists show, he had a further provocation, our Lord here confirms the historian's statement. Ever since the Baptist's days a revolutionary spirit had been abroad in the land, and Jewish patriots had been dreaming of a national deliverance and watching for an opportunity to achieve it. Here lay the Baptist's limitation. The kingdom which he anticipated was not the Kingdom of Heaven but a kingdom of this world established by violence; and therefore, great though he was, he was less than the humblest disciple imbued with the Master's spirit.

3. *HIS CENSURE OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES*

xi. 16–19

16 *But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows.*

17 *And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.*

18 *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.*

19 *The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.*

THE idle market-place of a town was a favourite playground; and our Lord compares the men of His generation, particularly the Pharisees (cf. Lk. vii. 30) who were opposing Him as they had opposed John, to quarrelsome children wrangling over their games. First they wanted to play at a wedding, and they were angry at John because he did not dance to their piping. His austerity offended them, and they said he had a devil, an evil spirit of melancholy. Then they wanted to play at a funeral, and they were angry at Jesus because He did not join in the dirge. His *bonhomie* offended them; and because He attended weddings and entertainments (cf. Jo. ii. 1–11; Mt. ix. 10, 11), they styled Him "glutton," "winebibber," "friend of publicans and sinners." There was no pleasing them, and they stood convicted of unreasonable obduracy.

"And" (R.V.), adds our Lord, "Wisdom is justified (literally "was justified," in grammatical phrase a *gnomic aorist*, indicating that He is quoting a maxim of the Jewish sages) of her children," or, according to another form of the maxim which many authorities follow both here and in St. Luke (vii. 35),

" her works." Wisdom, thus personified (cf. Pr. viii, ix), is the Divine Wisdom, God's counsel (cf. Lk. vii. 30), His providential dealing with men. And who are " her children "? They are her scholars who sit at her feet and profit by her instruction, as it is written in the Book of Ecclesiasticus (iv. 11) : " Wisdom exalteth her sons, and taketh hold of them that seek her." And thus our Lord's meaning is that, however it may have offended others, the true scholars of Divine Wisdom had recognised the reason of her dealing with men both in John's ministry and in His own. And so, according to the alternative form of the maxim, she was " justified by her works." To such as were taught of God, John and our Lord alike had proved ministers of salvation.

THE TURNING-POINT OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY
(xi. 20–30)

HITHERTO our Lord's ministry has proceeded smoothly. Not merely the town of Capernaum but the whole province of Galilee has been stirred by His preaching and miracles, and His fame as surely none other than the Messiah promised of old has spread far and wide (cf. iv. 23–25). Displeasing and indeed perilous as the enthusiasm of the populace was to Him, being inspired by a false ideal of the Messianic Kingdom, it was accompanied in many cases by a recognition of the glory of His grace, and He had won not a few true disciples and surrounded Himself with a band of Apostles. To all appearance His ministry had been triumphantly successful; but amid the applause of the multitude He had heard ominous mutterings ever louder and fiercer—the voices of the Pharisees, especially the learned order of the Scribes, jealous of His popularity and indignant at His scathing censure of their manners and doctrines. Hitherto they had refrained from open hostility, but now they declare war against Him and begin the bitter campaign which ended in His crucifixion. To the unfolding of this dark story the Evangelist now addresses himself, but ere he begins it he marks the crisis by introducing here, unchronologically yet most appositely, two impressive pronouncements of our Lord.

1. *THE IRRESPONSIVENESS OF THE CITIES OF GALILEE*

xi. 20–24

20 *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:*

21 *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.*

22 *But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.*

23 *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.*

24 *But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*

IT appears from internal evidence and also from its position in St. Luke's narrative (cf. x. 13–15) that this passage belongs to the close of our Lord's Galilean ministry. He was setting out on His last journey to Jerusalem to make a final appeal to the obdurate capital and there lay down His life; and as He took His way up the mountainside behind Capernaum, He wistfully surveyed the scene of His labours —the Plain of Gennesaret, the blue Lake, and the distant towns where He had preached His gracious message and wrought His gracious miracles; and this lamentation broke from His lips. It is indeed a lamentation; for here as elsewhere His recurring exclamation "Woe unto thee" signifies rather "Alas for thee." It is not an imprecation but a commiseration, bewailing the opportunity which those cities had lost

and the doom which they had incurred. They were the towns where in the course of His ministry His most signal miracles had been wrought, and He mentions three by name. The first is Chorazin a little way inland at the head of the Lake and some four miles distant from Capernaum; and it is significant that, though quoted here as the scene of an especial manifestation of our Lord's grace, it is mentioned nowhere else in the Gospel-story—an incidental evidence of the wideness and fullness of His ministry. The wonderful things recorded by the Evangelists are but drops of the plenteous rain which fell on Galilee in the season of her gracious visitation (cf. Jo. xxi. 25). Bethsaida was Bethsaida Julias (cf. Lk. ix. 10) some three miles eastward from Chorazin across the upper Jordan; and close by it was wrought that miracle so memorable for the revelation which it conveyed—the feeding of the five thousand (cf. Mt. xiv. 13–21; Mk. vi. 30–44; Lk. ix. 10–17; Jo. vi. 1–14). The marvels which they had witnessed should have stirred the souls of the people of these towns and won them to faith, yet it was but a scanty harvest that the Lord had reaped there; and here, as He bids farewell to Galilee, He contrasts the response which He had won from the heathen folk of Tyre and Sidon in the course of His brief sojourn among them (cf. Mk. vii. 31). And what of Capernaum, privileged above all the cities of the earth, inasmuch as the Lord dwelt there, and her streets were trodden by His blessed feet, and her people daily beheld His gracious face? Privilege brings responsibility, and on this principle by reason of her large unbelief she was guiltier than Sodom. "And thou, Capernaum," says our Lord, echoing the prophet's apostrophe to the proud king of Babylon of old (cf. Is. xiv. 13, 15), "'shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? Unto Hades shalt thou descend.'" Not lightly was the sentence spoken. Galilee shared the doom which the Jewish people suffered at the hands of the Romans and successive invaders for their rejection of the Heavenly Redeemer. Those cities have as utterly perished as though, like the Cities of the Plain, they had been swept by a fiery deluge. The very site of Capernaum is obliterated (cf. exposition of iv. 12–16).

Titus and Omar wrought fair Palestine
No hurt like His who gave her hallowed ground
The fatal benediction of His feet!
Love's house is desolate for love of Love!
The waters glass no sail; the ways have shrunk
Into a camel-path; the centuries
With flood and blast have torn the terrace bare
Where the fox littered in the grapes. Ask not
Which was "His City" 'mid this ruined life!
None surely knoweth of Capernaum
Whether 'twas here, or there.

2. *THE RESPONSE OF HUMAN NEED*

xi. 25–30

25 *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

26 *Even so, Father : for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

27 *All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*

28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

29 *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

30 *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

THE situation in Capernaum and the other towns of Galilee at the close of our Lord's ministry was that He was bitterly opposed by the dominant caste of the Pharisees, while the populace wavered between deference to their rulers and wonderment at His miracles. The enthusiasm which these excited was for the most part spiritually valueless and indeed positively mischievous, betokening, as it did, a false idea of His Messiahship ; and it would have been a sorry issue had His appeal won no other response. But wherever His message had been proclaimed by word or work, there were souls that perceived its heavenly grace and found therein pardon for their sin, comfort for their sorrow, and the satisfaction of their yearning after God ; and these, humble as they were and lightly esteemed in the world's sight, He recognised as the true and

abiding fruits of His ministry. And He blesses God for them in this exultant thanksgiving (vers. 25–27) which, according to St. Luke (x. 21, 22), He uttered in the course of His last journey to Jerusalem when He heard of the success of the seventy disciples whom He had sent before Him to prepare a welcome for Him and His message in the towns along the route.

More than a century later the philosopher Celsus based upon these words of our Lord a severe indictment of Christianity. Behold, he sneered, the terms of admission to its fellowship! "Let no educated man approach, no wise, no prudent man; for such things are deemed evil among us. But if one be unlearned or witless or uneducated or a babe, let him boldly come." Reasoning thus in his Greek pride of intellect the philosopher ignored a lesson which is written largely on the pages of history—the lesson which St. Paul enforced when he bade the intellectual Corinthians consider how God chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak, base, despised things to confound the mighty (1 Cor. i. 26–28). It is in truth a universal law of the providential order. Look at the natural domain. What is it that continually "renews the face of the earth"? It is, as Darwin has taught us, the operation of the earth-worms ever bringing fresh soil to the surface as the upper layer is exhausted. Without their unnoticed yet beneficent ministration vegetation would quickly disappear and the earth would become a barren desert. And what is it that every spring-time flushes the bare forest with verdure and blossom? It is the rising of the sap from the hidden roots. And even so is it in the moral and spiritual domains. When the Roman Empire withered and decayed, its civilisation was saved by the invasion of the rude nations of northern Europe, flooding its effete system with a fresh, vigorous manhood. And every triumph of liberty, every spiritual enlargement in the modern world from the Reformation onward, has been achieved by a movement from beneath, the stirring of the people's soul and conscience and the rebellion of their deep and generous instincts against the bonds of priestcraft and tyranny.

The supreme example is the inauguration of the Kingdom

of Heaven. The Gospel is a message of salvation, and it appealed only to such as had realised their sore need. Their need of it was hidden, says our Lord, from "the wise and prudent," that is, as the Greek terms signify, the intellectual with their philosophical theories of the universe and the practical with their skill in the management of worldly affairs. Both were well content with the existing order; but to weak and erring souls that felt "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world," the Gospel was indeed good tidings, and they welcomed the Saviour and His revelation of a Heavenly Father's mercy and compassion. And here the Evangelist introduces His gracious invitation to "the weary and heavy laden" (vers. 28–30). It is recorded by St. Matthew alone; and it matters little what its precise occasion may have been, since its significance is independent of its historical connection. Observe that it is a clear echo of a passage in the Book of Ecclesiasticus (li. 23–27), written in the first quarter of the second century B.C. by another Jesus, the Son of Sirach.

> Draw near unto me, ye unlearned,
> And lodge in the house of instruction.
> Say, wherefore are ye lacking in these things,
> And your souls are very thirsty?
> I opened my mouth, and spake,
> Get her for yourselves without money.
> Put your neck under the yoke,
> And let your soul receive instruction:
> She is hard at hand to find.
> Behold with your eyes,
> How that I laboured but a little,
> And found for myself much rest.

Nor is this the only instance where our Lord refers in His teaching to that old book (compare Mt. vi. 7 with Ecclus. vii. 4; Mt. vi. 14, 15, Mk. xi. 25 with Ecclus. xxviii. 2; Lk. v. 39 with Ecclus. ix. 10; Lk. xii. 16–21 with Ecclus. xi. 18, 19). It is plain that He loved it, as indeed it well deserved; for it is the most beautiful of all the apocryphal scriptures of the Old Testament, and doubtless it was only the lateness of its appearance that excluded it from the sacred canon. And His fondness for it is an example of His constant care for precious things

which the world neglected. But whatever He touched He ennobled and glorified; and He does not merely quote that ancient passage: He fills it with a larger meaning. On the lips of the Son of Sirach it was a commendation of Divine Wisdom (cf. xi. 19). It is to her that the sage bids his disciples draw near after his own example; but our Lord puts Himself in the place of Wisdom. "Come unto Me" is His invitation—a large personal claim, making Him nothing less than the Divine Wisdom Incarnate and thus asserting His true deity.

The imagery of the passage is homely, familiar, and appealing to the Galilean peasantry—a pair of oxen struggling with their load. Their trouble was not that the load was too heavy for them, but (1) that the yoke—intended, like a horse's collar, to facilitate the dragging of the load—was ill-fitting and chafed their necks, and (2) that they were ill-matched and did not pull together. Nor would our Lord's hearers miss His meaning, since "the yoke of the Law" was a common Jewish phrase. Intended as a helpful rule of faith and conduct, the Law, as elaborated by Rabbinical casuistry, had proved a vexatious encumbrance—"a yoke of bondage," as St. Paul terms it (Gal. v. 1), "a yoke which," as St. Peter confessed at the Council of Jerusalem (Ac. xv. 10), "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." And thus, when our Lord bids His disciples "take His yoke upon them," He means that they should lay aside the old Law with its oppressive multitude of precepts and prohibitions, and submit themselves to His Law, His better rule of faith and conduct. His Law is "an easy" or rather, as the word is truly rendered elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 4; Eph. iv. 32), "a kindly yoke"—a well-fitting yoke which does not chafe. For what is His Law? It is the law which regulated His own life and conduct while He dwelt here; and it is comprehended in these two principles—"doing the Father's will" and "loving as He loves us." And when we thus wear His yoke, "our burden" or rather, since it is the cognate noun of the verb rendered "heavy laden," "our load is light." For "taking His yoke upon us" means taking Him as our yoke-fellow; and when we are in the traces with Him, then our load is His, and with Him to aid us it is light.

It is worthy of remembrance that the mediæval saints, following the version of the Latin Vulgate " I will refresh you," " ye shall find refreshment for your souls," associated this passage with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, hearing in it His gracious invitation to His weary pilgrims that they should turn aside to the Hospice which He has built for them by the way and refresh themselves at His Table. " Thou biddest me," says St. Thomas à Kempis, " confidently approach unto Thee if I would have part with Thee, and receive the nourishment of immortality if I desire to obtain eternal life and glory. ' Come,' sayest Thou, ' unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.' O sweet and lovely word in a sinner's ear, that Thou, O Lord my God, invitest one poor and needy unto the Communion of Thy most holy Body! Thanks unto Thee, good Jesus, eternal Shepherd, who hast deigned to refresh us poor exiles with Thy precious Body and Blood and invite us unto the perception of these mysteries even with the accost of Thine own mouth."

THE OFFENCE OF SABBATH-BREAKING

(Cf. Mk. ii. 23–iii. 6 ; Lk. vi. 1–11)

1. *PLUCKING EARS OF CORN*

xii. 1–8

1 *At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn ; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.*

2 *But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.*

3 *But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him ;*

4 *How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests ?*

5 *Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless ?*

6 *But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.*

7 *But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*

8 *For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.*

SABBATH-BREAKING was a capital offence, punishable, like blasphemy, by stoning (cf. Ex. xxxi. 14, 15 ; Num. xv. 32–36). It might seem the last offence that could be laid to our Lord's charge, regardful as He was of the sacred Law which He had come not to destroy but to fulfil, and regular in His observance of public worship (cf. Lk. iv. 16). And indeed there was nothing in the ancient order more congenial to the spirit of His teaching than the beneficent institution of a weekly day of rest for the refreshment of man and beast

and the soul's enjoyment of communion with God. But the law of the Sabbath divinely ordained of old was one thing, and the Pharisaic interpretation thereof was quite another. It is written (Ex. xx. 10) : " In it thou shalt not do any work," and this commandment the Scribes meticulously elaborated. First they specified forty works save one as falling under the prohibition. These thirty-nine were generic or, as their phrase was, " fathers " ; and under each they classed numerous " descendants " or derivative works. Thus, ploughing was a " father," and digging a " descendant." Grinding was a " father," and chopping vegetables a " descendant." Reaping was a " father," and plucking an ear or even a blade of grass was a " descendant " ; nay, it was unlawful for a woman to look into her mirror on the Sabbath, since she might espy a grey hair and be tempted to pluck it out, and this would have been " reaping." Again, threshing was a " father," and rubbing out the grains of an ear between one's palms was a " descendant."

A derivative work was, no less than a generic, a violation of the Sabbath ; and hence appears the significance of this incident which, by reason of its importance as a declaration of open hostility against our Lord, is recorded by all the Synoptists (cf. Mk. ii. 23–28 ; Lk. vi. 1–5). Since the grain was standing ripe on the rich fields of the Plain of Gennesaret, it was near harvest ; and since harvest fell at the beginning of April in time, when the Passover was late, for the unleavened bread to be baked of new flour, it was now the month of March, 27 A.D., just at the close of the first year of our Lord's Galilean ministry. He had been abroad in pursuit of His gracious business among the people ; and in passing through the cornfields on their homeward way His hungry disciples plucked ripe ears here and there and, adds St. Luke, rubbed them with their hands. Some Pharisees observed it and recognised their opportunity. What was the offence in their judgment ? It was not that the disciples were committing theft ; for the ancient law, always humane and solicitous of the people's privileges, not only required that a free path should be left through sown lands but permitted wayfarers to pluck grapes or ears as they passed (cf. Dt. xxiii. 24, 25). The offence was that it was the Sabbath Day, and in

plucking the ears and rubbing out the grain the disciples, according to the Rabbinical law, were reaping and threshing.

And what was our Lord's defence? He appealed to Scripture, citing two passages and prefacing each with that question henceforth so often on His lips in His controversies with the Pharisees "Have ye not read?"—a stinging sarcasm on their ignorance of the Scriptures which they professed to revere. The first quotation is the story of the fugitive David visiting the sanctuary at Nob and appropriating the hallowed bread which the Law reserved for priestly use (cf. 1 Sam. xxi. 1–6). It was not indeed a violation of the Sabbath, but it was a violation of the Law in another particular; and it established the general principle that since, as the prophet had declared (Hos. vi. 6), mercy is more to God than sacrifice, a ceremonial ordinance should yield to human need. And if direct evidence was required, was it not written (cf. Num. xxviii. 9, 10) that on the Sabbath as on other days the priests should do the work of their office, preparing the burnt offerings, the meal offerings, and the drink offerings? Else the service of the Temple would have ceased. And, says our Lord, "One greater" or rather, as the best manuscripts have it (cf. R.V. marg.), "a greater thing than the Temple is here." And what was that? It was the human need which the Temple had been instituted to serve. And not the Temple alone but the Law and all its ordinances, including the Sabbath. "For," He adds, summing up His argument (cf. Mk. ii. 27), "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Because He was the Son of Man, the sympathetic Friend of weak, suffering humanity, He was Lord of the Sabbath, since it is not a tax which God exacts for His own aggrandisement but a gift which He has mercifully bestowed for our profit.

> Book and Church and Day are given
> For man, not God,—for earth, not heaven,
> The blessed means to holiest ends,
> Not masters, but benignant friends.

2. *HEALING A WITHERED HAND*

xii. 9–21

9 *And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:*

10 *And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.*

11 *And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?*

12 *How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.*

13 *Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.*

14 *Then the Pharisees went out, and *held a council against him, how they might destroy him.*

15 *But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;*

16 *And charged them that they should not make him known:*

17 *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,*

18 *Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.*

19 *He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.*

20 *A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.*

21 *And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.*

* Or, *took counsel.*

WHEN it is written that "He departed thence, and went into their synagogue" (R.V.), it is not meant that He betook Himself from the cornfield to the synagogue of Capernaum. For (1) St. Luke (vi. 6) states that this second encounter with the Pharisees happened "on another" or more precisely "the next Sabbath," and (2) in the original "departed" signifies properly "migrated" (cf. viii. 34). As we have seen, the Passover was approaching, and toward the close of that week the Lord departed from Capernaum and, as St. John records (cf. v. 1), set out for Jerusalem to keep the Feast. The scene of this incident was, as St. Mark has it according to the true text (iii. 1), "a synagogue"—the synagogue of the town where He rested that Sabbath in the course of His journey; and it is suggested by St. Mark's narrative that this town was Tiberias, which lay by the Lake some ten miles south of Capernaum and had recently been rebuilt by the Tetrarch Herod Antipas to serve as his capital and was still incomplete. Attending public worship after His wont (cf. Lk. iv. 16) that Sabbath, our Lord was invited to address the congregation (cf. Lk. vi. 6), and His appearance in their midst excited keen interest. The Rulers of the Synagogue had heard of His encounter with their colleagues at Capernaum the previous Sabbath, and they anticipated a renewal of the controversy. For there was present in the congregation a man whose right hand (cf. Lk. vi. 6) was "withered," cramped and twisted with the rheumatic affection so prevalent on the sultry shores of the Lake. According to an early tradition he was a stonemason, employed doubtless, if the scene was indeed Tiberias, in the extensive operations then in progress in the town; and the crippling of his right hand had disabled him and reduced him to want. It was an appealing case; and what if the Lord should heal him? It would be a breach of the Rabbinical law, which ordained that only where life was in danger might a physician do his work on the Sabbath.

It happened as the Rulers had anticipated. After the Lord's discourse the sufferer appealed to Him. "I was a mason," he explained according to the tradition, "seeking a livelihood with my hands. I pray thee, Jesus, to restore me to health,

that I may not shamefully beg my bread." The Pharisees, occupying the front seats round the preacher's platform, interposed. "Is it lawful," they demanded, using the phrase of their colleagues at Capernaum the previous Sabbath (cf. ver. 2), "to heal"—not "on the Sabbath days" but simply—"on the Sabbath?" It was an embarrassing question, and a direct answer would have put the Lord at their mercy. The legal course was that, since the man's life was in no danger, his healing should be postponed until sunset when the Sabbath ended (cf. Lk. xiii. 14), but the Lord would thus have acknowledged the unlawfulness of His habitual practice; whereas by healing him forthwith He would violate the law and afford His adversaries the opportunity which they desired for arraigning Him. Summoning the man from his seat and bidding him take his stand before the platform in full view of the congregation (cf. Mk. iii. 3; Lk. vi. 8), He put that counter-question, appealing from the restriction of the law to the instinct of humanity. They held their peace, and sweeping an indignant glance round the circle of malignant faces (cf. Mk. iii. 5), He pronounced His unchallengeable judgment. Whether or no it was "lawful to heal," it was "lawful to do well on the Sabbath."

His argument would win the congregation's applause and His miracle their reverence, and in face of the popular sentiment the Pharisees durst not execute their design of arraigning Him on a capital charge; but they would not abandon it. Exasperated by their public discomfiture, they held a consultation. They "took counsel," says St. Mark (iii. 6), "with the Herodians." And who were the Herodians? They were Sadducees (cf. Mt. xvi. 6 with Mk. viii. 15); and as the Sadducees, unlike the patriotic Pharisees, always supported the ruling power and in the Roman province of Judæa were rewarded for their subservience with a monopoly of the lucrative offices of the priesthood, so in Galilee they devoted themselves to the Tetrarch Herod Antipas. The Herodians or followers of Herod were his Sadducean courtiers, and their appearance here suggests that the scene was his capital of Tiberias. It was truly an unholy alliance when the Pharisees caballed with these their inveterate antagonists for the

destruction of our Lord; and when He heard of it, He recognised the peril of His situation and promptly "withdrew Himself from thence" or rather "retreated thence"—the word which is used of the Wise Men's retreat to their own country and Joseph's flight to Egypt (Mt. ii. 12–14). His miracle in the synagogue had been noised abroad, and as He went His way, He was beset by suppliants for healing; nor did He refuse their entreaties, eager though He was to reach the southern frontier of Galilee and escape from Herod's jurisdiction. Wherefore did He "charge them that they should not make Him known"? It was not that He was fearful of provoking His adversaries; for they were already set on arresting Him. The Evangelist discovers the thought of His heart when, in pursuance of his design of persuading his Jewish readers that our Lord was indeed their Saviour promised of old, he sees in His solicitude a fulfilment of that prophetic picture of the Servant of the Lord (Is. xlii. 1–4), so alien from their dream of the Messiah as a political deliverer: "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." He was weary of strife, sick at heart of malignant perversions of His gracious works.

CHARGE OF ALLIANCE WITH THE DEVIL

xii. 22–37

22 *Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.*

23 *And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?*

24 *But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by *Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*

25 *And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:*

26 *And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*

27 *And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.*

28 *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*

29 *Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.*

30 *He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*

31 *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

32 *And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*

* Gr. *Beelzebul*: and so ver. 27.

33 *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.*

34 *O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*

35 *A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*

36 *But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

37 *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

OUR Lord has now returned from His pilgrimage to the Feast of the Passover (cf. Jo. v); and it is no small aggravation of His difficulties that His adversaries at Capernaum have been reinforced by a company of "Scribes from Jerusalem" (cf. Mk. iii. 22), commissioned by the Sanhedrin to observe His doings in Galilee and find occasion for arraigning Him. Here we see them at their malignant work. The healing of this blind mute—a demoniac according to the accepted theory of the time (cf. viii. 28)—was in the popular judgment a fresh evidence that our Lord was indeed "the Son of David," that is, the Messiah; and this angered His jealous critics. Unable to challenge the reality of the miracle, they ascribed it to "black art"—a charge which had already been whispered against Him (cf. ix. 34). He had power over the devils, they averred, because He was in alliance with their chief Beelzebub or, as the best manuscripts have it, Beelzebul. *Baal-zebub*, "Lord of flies"—the deity credited with the sending of the fly-plague—was of old the Canaanitish god of Ekron (cf. 2 Ki. i. 2, 16). The Israelites contemptuously modified the name to *Baal-zebul*, "Lord of dung," and in later days identified him with the Devil. Hence in thus accusing our Lord those Pharisees aggravated their charge by couching it in terms of coarse contumely.

Like the charge of witchcraft in after times, it was a dangerous

allegation ; and now that it was made openly our Lord openly refutes it. First He exposes its absurdity. It was proverbial that disunion is fatal to kingdom, cities, and families ; and if He was leagued with Satan in casting out devils, there was civil war in Satan's kingdom. Then He dealt them a shrewd home-thrust. The Scribes shared the universal belief in demoniacal possession, and they approved the practice of the Jewish exorcists who professed to expel evil spirits by incantations and charms (cf. Ac. xix. 13–16). And thus they were confronted with a dilemma : If it was by Beelzebul that our Lord cast out devils, then these " their sons " (R.V.), that is, their disciples, were in the like condemnation ; while, if it was in their case a work of the Spirit of God, it was so no less in His, and in condemning Him the Scribes were condemning the work of God. It was a plain issue, and He presents it to the bystanders by quoting two proverbs : (1) " He that is not with Me is against Me." It was a just law of the Athenian legislator Solon that a citizen who stood neutral in time of civil disorder, should, when the issue was determined, be accounted a traitor. It is the duty of every true man to side with Truth at all hazards. And even so our Lord will have no trimmers. It is told of James Guthrie, the martyr of the Scottish Covenant whom Cromwell referred to as " the short man who would not bow," that once in face of the menace of persecution a brother minister of less heroic mould counselled submission. " We have a Scots proverb, ' Jouk (bow), an' let the jaw (wave) gae by ' : will ye jouk a little, Mr. Guthrie ? " " Mr. Rollock," was the answer, " there is no joukin' in the cause of Christ." (2) " He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad." When the harvest is in danger, one who stands idly by and saves no precious sheaves, aids the devastation.

Herewith our Lord turns to His traducers and pronounces upon them a dread sentence. In ascribing His gracious miracles to Satanic agency they had committed a sin, the only sin for which there is no forgiveness—the sin of " blasphemy against the Spirit." It was not against Himself merely that they had spoken. This they might innocently have done, since it was difficult for Jews, with their secular ideal of the Messiah, to allow

the claims of the lowly Son of Man. Their offence was that they had done worse than "speak against the Son of Man." They had alleged that His miracles, those works of divine compassion, were works of the Devil, thus deliberately, in the prophet's language (cf. Is. v. 20), "calling evil good and good evil, putting darkness for light and light for darkness." This is "blasphemy against the Spirit"—the silencing of the Inner Voice, the rejection of its testimony, the trampling down of one's spiritual instincts; and it is an outrage which incurs a terrible and inevitable penalty. The law is that an abused faculty decays; and it is a universal law. (1) It operates in the physical domain. For example, to live in the darkness is to go blind. "When," wrote Henry Drummond, "one examines the little *Crustacea* which have inhabited for centuries the lakes of the Mammoth Caves of Kentucky, one is at first astonished to find these animals apparently endowed with perfect eyes. The pallor of the head is broken by two black pigment specks, conspicuous indeed as the only bits of colour on the whole blanched body; and these, even to the casual observer, certainly represent well-defined organs of vision. But what do they with eyes in these Stygian waters? There reigns an everlasting night. Is the law for once at fault? A swift incision with the scalpel, a glance with a lens, and their secret is betrayed. The eyes are a mockery. Externally they are organs of vision—the front of the eye is perfect; behind, there is nothing but a mass of ruins. The optic nerve is a shrunken, atrophied, and insensate nerve. These animals have organs of vision, and yet they have no vision. They have eyes, but they see not." (2) The law operates in the intellectual domain. In an impressive passage of his autobiography Darwin, then in his seventy-third year, confesses that, though in early life he had relished music, pictures, and poetry, he had gradually lost his æsthetic tastes; alleging as the reason that since he had neglected that side of his nature, his mind had become "a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts." "If," says he regretfully, "I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied

would thus have been kept active through use." And (3) the law operates in the spiritual domain. A disregarded conscience grows numb and eventually dies. And conscience, a term of the Stoic philosophy, is nothing else than, in Christian parlance, the Voice of the Holy Spirit. Here is the dread calamity whereof our Lord warns those Pharisees who called good evil and closed their eyes to the light. They were trampling down their spiritual instincts; and there is no hope for one whose spiritual instincts are slain. There is no forgiveness for him, inasmuch as the condition of forgiveness is repentance, and if one cannot repent, how can one be forgiven?

According to St. Mark (cf. iii. 30) the rencontre closed with this solemn pronouncement, but St. Matthew represents our Lord as discoursing further on the guilt of evil thoughts and evil words. Apparently the passage belongs elsewhere (cf. Mt. vii. 17; Lk. vi. 43–45), and our Evangelist has introduced it here in view of a question which may arise in our minds in reading that awful condemnation of the Scribes. Was it not unduly severe? It was indeed a monstrous charge which they had preferred against Him; but was it more than an "idle word" spoken in the heat of controversy and the bitterness of discomfiture? And so the Evangelist introduces here this apposite lesson of our Lord. Since the words of our lips express the thoughts of our hearts, they reveal what manner of men we are. "Speak," said one of old, "that I may see thee"; and is it not written (Pr. xvii. 28) that "even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise"? An evil word betrays an evil heart; and forasmuch as

> The heart ay's the part ay
> That makes us right or wrang,

"every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment." Here "idle" is literally "inoperative," "unworking," and our Lord tells us that there is in truth no such thing as an "idle word." Every word that we speak is operative, "a seed-grain that cannot die," producing inevitable and incalculable consequences for which we are answerable. "I have seen some Roman-Catholick Authors," says Addison, "who tell us that vicious Writers

continue in Purgatory so long as the Influence of their Writings continues upon Posterity: For Purgatory, say they, is nothing else but a cleansing us of our Sins, which cannot be said to be done away, so long as they continue to operate and corrupt Mankind. The vicious Author, say they, sins after Death, and so long as he continues to sin, so long must he expect to be punished." Truly it were well for us to realise the potency of words for good or evil, and not least casual words whereof the speaker makes small account. There are kindly folk whose very faces are a benediction, and whom it is good to meet if only to exchange greetings: you are sure of a word from them which will linger like music in your heart, and you will go on your way gladdened and do your business the better. And alas! there is another sort, often worthy folk and well enough intentioned, yet you would cross the street to avoid them; for you are sure to hear from them some word which will jar upon you and rankle in your mind. Indeed there is nothing more efficacious for good or ill than words, and an unbridled tongue does untold mischief. Kind words will make sunshine in the poorest home, and there is many a well furnished dwelling made miserable by nagging and discontent. Just "idle words," yet they are crimes; for evil words mean evil thoughts, and evil thoughts evil hearts.

REQUEST FOR A SIGN

xii. 38–45

38 *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.*

39 *But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas :*

40 *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly ; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

41 *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : because they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

42 *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

43 *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.*

44 *Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out ; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.*

45 *Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there : and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

AS we have seen, St. Mark defines those Pharisees who accused our Lord of alliance with Satan as the commissioners from Jerusalem ; and according to St. Luke (cf. xi. 16) it was not they but " others " who presented this fresh challenge. They are styled here " certain of the Scribes

and Pharisees," evidently local Rabbis who had witnessed the encounter and on the discomfiture of their *confrères* took up the controversy. Feigning honest perplexity, they proposed that our Lord should demonstrate His divine commission by a direct appeal to God, after the manner of Elijah when he called down fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice (cf. 1 Ki. xviii. 36–39), or Isaiah when he brought the shadow on the sundial ten degrees backward (cf. Is. xxxviii. 7, 8). That would be an indisputable "sign"—"a sign from Heaven" (cf. Lk. xi. 16), God's express arbitrament of the controversy. They knew well that our Lord would decline the challenge. It has indeed in all ages pleased God to declare His judgment in marvellous ways; but to compel Him thus were a wanton impiety like the mediæval trial by combat or by fire. They knew that our Lord would decline their challenge, and their design was to triumph in His refusal, representing it as a confession of impotence and so discrediting Him with the multitude. But their stratagem turned to their own discomfiture. For what was His answer?

1. He told them roundly that their request for a sign proved them, in prophetic phrase, "an evil and adulterous generation"—faithless and false to God (cf. Jer. ix. 2; Hos. v. 3, 4; Ex. xxxiv. 15, 16; Ps. lxxiii. 27).

Not for signs in heaven above
  Or earth beneath they look,
Who know with John His smile of love,
  With Peter His rebuke.

In joy of inward peace, or sense
  Of sorrow over sin,
He is His own best evidence,
  His witness is within.

2. No sign would be given them save "the sign of the prophet Jonah." And what was that? According to the text before us it was our Lord's entombment for three days and three nights betwixt His Crucifixion and His Resurrection, enigmatically foreshadowed by the ancient prophet's imprisonment for three days and three nights in the whale's belly

(cf. Jon. i. 17) ; but here difficulties immediately present themselves. One is that our Lord was not " three days and three nights " in the Sepulchre. He died on the Cross at three o'clock on the Friday afternoon and was buried ere the day ended, that is, ere sunset when, according to the Jewish reckoning, the day closed and the next day—the Sabbath (our Saturday)—began (cf. Jo. xix. 31). He lay in the Sepulchre all the Sabbath and was raised very early, toward daybreak, on the Sunday morning. Thus He was " in the heart of the earth " some two hours of Friday, all the twenty-four of Saturday, and most of the night which ushered in the Sunday—one whole day and a portion of two others. This is accurately expressed by the phrase most frequently employed in the New Testament—" raised on the third day " (cf. Mt. xvi. 21, xvii. 23, xxvii. 64 ; Lk. ix. 22, xiii. 32, xviii. 33, xxiv. 7, 21, 46 ; Ac. x. 40 ; 1 Cor. xv. 4) ; and no less accurately, when their force is perceived, by two others : (1) " in three days " (cf. Jo. ii. 19 ; Mt. xxvii. 40), and (2) " after three days " (cf. Mt. xxvii. 63 ; Mk. viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 34). The former means that it happened " within three days," not that three days elapsed ere it happened. And as for the latter it is an example of the ancient manner of reckoning, which in counting from a fixed point included it in the calculation. On this reckoning indeed our Lord was " three days " in the heart of the earth, but on no reckoning was He there " three days and three nights." Again, the prophet's imprisonment in the whale's belly was no sign to the Ninevites, since they knew nothing of it. It had happened far away in the Mediterranean ere he travelled eastward across the desert and appeared in their midst. What moved them was his preaching—his proclamation of impending judgment and his call to repentance (cf. Jon. iii). And not only is this " the sign of the prophet Jonah " whereof our Lord here proceeds to speak (cf. ver. 41), but what do we find on turning to St. Luke's parallel narrative (cf. xi. 29–32) ? There is no mention there of our Lord's burial. It is written that, even as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so should the Son of Man be to that generation, and what had appealed to the Ninevites and won them to repentance was nothing else than Jonah's preaching.

What then shall we make of a verse thus erroneous in itself and irreconcilable alike with its context and with the companion record? It is an example of a mishap which frequently befell the sacred text in early days when it was laboriously copied by hand. The margin of a manuscript afforded space for various notes and comments. Sometimes a copyist would inadvertently omit a word or a sentence, and he would enter it on the margin; and often too a careful reader would inscribe there an illustration or elucidation. By and by a manuscript thus annotated would serve as a copyist's exemplar; and he might easily, especially if he were a dull, mechanical person, mistake a marginal comment for an accidental omission, and in transcription he would insert it in the text. Here is an instance. This bewildering sentence (ver. 40) is nothing else than a marginal comment incorporated with the sacred text. And a very dull comment it is, missing our Lord's purpose and confusing the passage. Omit it, and His meaning is luminous. He would grant those Pharisees no "sign from Heaven." His heavenly message was in their ears, and if they rejected it, then they stood condemned by the Ninevites who had repented at the preaching of Jonah, and by the Queen of Sheba who had bowed down before the wisdom of Solomon (cf. 1 Ki. x. 1).

Truly theirs was a parlous case, and He reads thence a solemn warning, the more apposite inasmuch as the occasion of the encounter was His healing of "one possessed with a devil." All maladies, physical, mental, and moral, were ascribed of old to demoniacal possession (cf. viii. 28), and as recovery meant the expulsion of the evil spirit, so a relapse was construed as the reinvasion of the victim by his tormentor. Here, in terms of that familiar idea, our Lord exhibits the all too frequent tragedy of moral declension. Some tenant the human heart must always have; and therefore the expulsion of an evil affection is not enough. A new and pure affection must enter and take possession; else, the heart remaining tenantless, the old affection will surely return and resume its unhallowed dominion. English history furnishes an impressive illustration of this truth. While the Puritans had the mastery, they cast out all evil things, putting down folly and wickedness by stern

laws and seeking to establish " the Reign of the Saints." For a time it seemed as though they had succeeded, but with the Restoration came the inevitable reaction. The house was swept and garnished, but it was empty ; and the evil spirit returned in sevenfold strength, and the last state was worse than the first. What Puritanism was in England, Pharisaism was in the days of our Lord ; and here, not without compassion, He admonishes His adversaries, those zealots for the Law, of the futility of their laborious observance of its ceremonial requirements. It is not thus that purity and peace are won, but by the flooding of the soul with heavenly grace. It is not enough that the evil spirit be cast out unless the Holy Spirit enter and take possession of the empty heart.

HIS KINSFOLK

xii. 46–50

46 *While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.*

47 *Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.*

48 *But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?*

49 *And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!*

50 *For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

ST. MARK has told us (cf. iii. 21) that, while our Lord was engaged with the multitude, "His friends" appeared on the scene with a sinister purpose. And now we learn who these were. They were "His mother and His brethren." The latter are mentioned repeatedly in the New Testament; and St. Matthew and St. Mark give their names as James, Joseph or, in the Greek form, Joses, Simon, and Judas, mentioning at the same time several sisters (cf. Mt. xiii. 55, 56; Mk. vi. 3). And since in that instance Joseph and Mary are introduced as His father and mother, the plain inference is that those brothers and sisters of our Lord were children of Joseph and Mary born to them by ordinary generation after she had, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, "brought forth her first-born son" (Lk. ii. 7; cf. Mt. i. 25), who was generally accounted the son of Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth. Probably no other opinion would ever have been entertained but for the emergence of two mischievous fictions. (1) The notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary, which heralded the mediæval superstition of Mariolatry. Hence arose the idea that "the

brethren of our Lord" were the children of Joseph by a former marriage and thus Mary's stepsons and our Lord's half-brothers, though only as Joseph was His "father." In truth they were not His kinsmen at all. It is significant that this theory makes its earliest appearance in the apocryphal *Gospel according to Peter*, a Doketic fiction dating from the middle of the second century. (2) The ascetic tendency to glorify celibacy and depreciate the sacred ordinance of marriage. Hence arose the idea that not only Mary but Joseph preserved the seal of virginity unbroken; and in the fourth century St. Jerome devised the theory that "the brethren of our Lord" were His cousins, children of "Mary the wife of Clopas" (R.V.), that brave woman who, according to St. John (xix. 25), stood beside the Cross and, as the Evangelist is supposed to affirm, was a sister of His mother Mary. The suggestion, however, is open to strong objections. Not only is it most unlikely that two sisters should have borne the same name, but St. John does not here designate the sister of our Lord's mother Mary, since "Mary the wife of Clopas" is not, as St. Jerome took it, in apposition to "His mother's sister." They are distinct persons, His mother's sister being Salome, the wife of Zebedee (cf. Mk. xv. 40; Mt. xxvii. 56). Moreover, James the Little was the son of Mary the wife of Clopas (cf. Mk. xv. 40); and since Clopas and Alphæus are alternative transliterations of the Aramaic name *Chalpai*, he was one of the Twelve Apostles (cf. Mt. x. 3; Mk. iii. 18; Lk. vi. 15), and as yet none of "the brethren of our Lord" believed in Him (cf. Jo. vii. 5). Thus it remains that our Lord was, according to the evangelic testimony, Mary's "first-born son" and His "brethren" were the children whom she subsequently bore to Joseph; and the sentiment which is hereby offended is no true reverence but an example of that pagan spirit of asceticism which so early infected the Christian Church and which has operated so mischievously all down her history, unhallowing God's good creation, degrading our human affections, and desecrating the sanctuary of the home.

It is no slight attestation of our Lord's heavenly origin that His "brethren" were so unlike Him. Though born in the same home which sheltered his childhood and brought up in

His companionship, they were men of coarse fibre, narrow-hearted and misjudging Jewish peasants, until at length their souls were mastered and their minds illumined by His transforming grace. He seemed to them a crazed enthusiast ; and, living at Nazareth with Mary, now evidently a widow, they imbued her with their stupid and heartless opinion. In view not merely of the frequent tidings which reached them of His doings in Galilee but of His recent conflict with the rulers at Jerusalem (cf. Jo. v) which doubtless they had witnessed when they were there attending the Feast of the Passover, they had concluded that He was mad ; and they and she travelled to Capernaum with the design of arresting Him and putting Him under restraint. They found Him busy with the multitude, and witnessed His rencontre with the Pharisees ; and now that it was ended, unable to push their way through the crowd, they passed a message to Him that they, "His mother and His brethren," were there, desiring to speak with Him.

And what shall we say of His answer? It was more, much more, than a personal application of that stern requirement which He had laid upon the Twelve when He sent them forth on their missions, that for His sake they must be ready to sacrifice the dearest of human affections (cf. x. 37). It was an emphatic declaration that for Him the ties of human kinship had no existence ; and its justification, its sole and all-sufficient justification, lies in the mystery of His birth. Apart from the evangelic story of the conception of His humanity of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin, our Lord would here stand convicted of a crime against natural affection as monstrous as that Egyptian monk's who, when told of his father's death, replied: "Cease blaspheming! My Father is immortal." None of the children of men could ever have fitly spoken thus, none but the Second Adam, the Eternal Son of God Incarnate.

TEACHING BY PARABLES (xiii. 1–52)

1. *THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER*

xiii. 1–9

1 *The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.*

2 *And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.*

3 *And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;*

4 *And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:*

5 *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:*

6 *And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

7 *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:*

8 *But other fell into good ground and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.*

9 *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

AFTER that protracted and distressful encounter our Lord retired to His lodging at Bethsaida, the harbour of Capernaum; and toward evening He went forth again with His disciples and seated Himself by the Lakeside. Evidently He meant to converse with them of the things of His Kingdom; but no sooner did they espy Him than the people flocked to Him in such numbers that He resorted to an accustomed expedient (cf. Lk. v. 1–3): He got into "a boat"

(cf. iv. 21) or, as St. Mark has it according to several manuscripts (cf. iv. 1), " the boat," meaning the " little boat " which He had instructed His fisher disciples to keep in readiness for such emergencies (cf. Mk. iii. 9), and pushing off a little way sat in her and addressed the assemblage thronging the beach.

His discourse on this occasion took a novel form. It was not preaching but a series of parables; and He simply told the parables without staying to interpret them or enforce their lessons. The first He took from the adjacent landscape. Before Him as He sat in the boat spread the Plain of Gennesaret, where of late the husbandmen had been busy, winning the harvest of their ploughing and sowing. " Behold," said He, " the sower (R.V.) went forth to sow." It was the same seed that he scattered everywhere, but the harvest was not everywhere the same; and what made the difference was the quality of the soil where the seed fell. Some handfuls fell on the beaten path, the " right of way " crossing the field (cf. xii. 1). There the seed found no lodgment, and the birds swooped down and devoured it. Here and there on the field were patches of shallow soil, where the bedrock lay near the surface; and the seed which fell on these quickly shot up, only to wither beneath the burning sun since there was no deep loam to nourish its roots. Here and there again were patches where in the tilling roots of thistles, nettles, and docks had been suffered to remain; and when the seed sprouted, these too grew up, and their rank growth choked the tender blades. Elsewhere the soil was soft and deep and clean; and there the seed found a lodgment, struck its roots into the rich tilth, and sprouted and grew and ripened. Yet even here the harvest varied, since even in good soil there are degrees of excellence according to its essential quality, its nourishment, and its exposure to wind and weather; and so the seed multiplied now an hundredfold, now sixtyfold, and again but thirtyfold.

2. *REASON OF OUR LORD'S PARABOLIC TEACHING*

xiii. 10–17

10 *And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*

11 *He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*

12 *For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*

13 *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

14 *And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:*

15 *For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

16 *But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

17 *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

"HE," concluded our Lord, "that hath ears (R.V.), let him hear," challenging His hearers to ponder what the parable signified yet offering no interpretation. And here the Evangelist interrupts his report of the discourse to tell what happened afterwards when the multitude had dispersed

and the disciples had Him alone (cf. Mk. iv. 10). They asked Him why He had adopted this novel manner of discoursing to the people ; and He explained to them that it marked a fresh and momentous departure in the conduct of His ministry. His earthly sojourn was hastening toward its close, and the increasing enmity of the rulers was a premonition of the day when He would depart and His Apostles would be left to continue the work alone. They were the men whom He had chosen for that high trust, and they had proved their capacity to understand " the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven " ; but as yet they were ill prepared and had need of large instruction. And therefore He would thenceforward devote Himself to this most needful task. They would be His especial care ; and in pursuance of His design He adopted two particular methods. One was that ever and anon He would withdraw with them from Capernaum and seek some peaceful retreat where He might converse with them alone. And the other was this new manner of teaching. The unmetaphysical Orientals delighted in apologues ; and just as Æsop taught wisdom by fables, so had the Hebrew prophets spoken parables (cf. 2 Sam. xii. 1–6 ; Is. v. 1–6 ; Ezk. xvii. 3–10, xxiv. 3–5). The Jewish Rabbis made large use of the same method ; and henceforth our Lord follows their example, no longer discoursing publicly of " the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven " but speaking to the multitudes which thronged about Him simple and memorable parables of God and His goodness, and afterwards, when He was alone with His disciples, unfolding the deeper significance thereof (cf. Mk. iv. 33, 34).

It was in a sense an abandonment of the multitude, but only as a wise teacher, once he has discovered the aptitudes of his pupils, takes peculiar pains with the more promising and seeks to develop their superior possibilities, according to those Rabbinical maxims which our Lord here aptly quotes : " Whosoever hath, to him shall be given " and " Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath " or, as it was otherwise expressed, " He who increases not decreases," meaning that a slothful disciple who is not always improving his knowledge by diligent study, soon forgets the little that he

knows. It is even thus, according to the prophet (Is. vi. 9, 10), that God deals with men, leaving those who harden their hearts and close their ears and eyes in ignorance and blindness. Yet His judgments are always merciful, and in turning thus from the unreceptive multitude our Lord had a gracious purpose toward them and all mankind. For He was turning from them that He might devote Himself to the instruction of the Twelve and their preparation for the task of winning the world when He was gone. It was a high mission, a sacred trust—the achievement of that salvation whereof prophets and saints had dreamed for ages.

3. *INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER*

xiii. 18–23

18 *Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.*

19 *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

20 *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;*

21 *Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

22 *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

23 *But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

THE parable had a twofold purpose, being at once a review of our Lord's own ministry hitherto and a premonition of the experience which awaited the Apostles and their successors from generation to generation in the prosecution of their mission. Observe that none of the unsatisfactory hearers whom the parable depicts were enemies of the Gospel. Those depicted by the beaten path are merely thoughtless and heedless. They "hear the Word and understand it not" or, as we might say, "do not *take it in*," whether because they are naturally dull and stupid, or because they are content with worldly good and their hearts have never been softened by affliction, or because by habitual trifling with spiritual appeals

they have grown callous or, in the phrase of a bygone generation, "Gospel-hardened," like the people of Bridgnorth, "a dead-hearted unprofitable people," who, says Richard Baxter, "made me resolve that I would never more go among a people that had been hardened in unprofitableness under an awakening ministry." Those, again, who are represented by "the rocky places" (R.V.) are the impulsive, unstable sort so common in every religious revival, emotional but shallow, easily enkindled to inconsiderate enthusiasm and as easily discouraged and "made to stumble" (cf. v. 29) when their ardour cools and difficulties arise. And what of those represented by the unclean soil? They are hearers of excellent possibility. The soil is soft and deep, and the good seed finds a lodgment in it; but in rich, warm natures there are ever unruly impulses—worldly ambition, carnal appetite, and the like—which, unless they be ruthlessly eradicated, gain the mastery. It does not always follow that such are utterly lost to the Kingdom of Heaven; and this our Lord recognises when He says, according to St. Luke's report (cf. viii. 14), that, choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, they "bring no fruit to perfection." At the best they bear but a meagre and stunted harvest. Truly the poet had reason to hesitate when he wrote:

> Dare we to this fancy give,
> That had the wild oat not been sown,
> The soil, left barren, scarce had grown
> The grain by which a man may live?

For it is a mischievous doctrine. Sin may be repented of and forgiven, but it always leaves a scar, a dark memory of shame and bitter regret. It is well to be a David, a Peter, a Mary Magdalene, "brought up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay"; but it is better to be a John, "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." See further exposition of Lk. viii. 4–15.

4. *PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN*

xiii. 24–35

24 *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field :*

25 *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*

26 *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.*

27 *So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field ? from whence then hath it tares ?*

28 *He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up ?*

29 *But he said, Nay ; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*

30 *Let both grow together until the harvest : and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them : but gather the wheat into my barn.*

31 *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field :*

32 *Which indeed is the least of all seeds : but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

33 *Another parable spake he unto them ; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three *measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

34 *All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables ; and without a parable spake he not unto them :*

* The word in the Greek is *a measure containing about a peck and a half, wanting a little more than a pint.*

35 *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables ; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.*

THE Evangelist now resumes his account of our Lord's discoursing from the boat to the multitude thronging the shore of the Lake, and reports three parables which He told them, illustrating the progress of the Kingdom of Heaven. The first—that of the Tares among the Wheat (vers. 24–30)—was suggested by the seed sown in the unclean soil and choked by the thorns ; and it deals with a difficulty which His Apostles would encounter by and by. It is most strikingly exemplified by the experience of St. Paul in the course of his vexatious controversy with the Judaists, those enemies who dogged his steps wherever he went preaching the Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ apart from the ceremonial of the Law, especially in Southern Galatia, and unsettled his Gentile converts by undermining his apostolic authority and insisting on the necessity of circumcision. The lesson of the parable is the wisdom and the duty of forbearance in circumstances like these ; and it is a lesson which zealots for the purity of the Church have always need to ponder. What did the householder mean when he warned his servants that, if they gathered the tares or darnel, a sort of ryegrass, they might root out the wheat as well ? Not merely that, intertwined as they were, it was hardly possible to root out the darnel without dislodging the wheat but that it was difficult at the early stage of their growth to distinguish the one from the other, and perhaps in rooting out what they took for darnel they might be rooting out wheat. And in its spiritual application the admonition is doubly apt. For, on the one hand, it is very possible that our judgments may err, and those whom we are disposed to condemn may be approved of God. How many of His most faithful servants have been cast out of the Church as heretics ! It is told of Savonarola that when they had stripped him of his priestly robes and the Bishop pronounced his sentence of excommunication, " I separate thee from the Church," " Yes," he exclaimed in his clear ringing tones, " from the Church

Militant but not from the Church Triumphant!" It is not for us, blind mortals, to pass sentence on our fellows. Rather should we leave them to God's judgment at the last. And furthermore this should be remembered—that while darnel is darnel and never can become wheat, a sinner may be won to penitence and faith and transformed into a saint. Wherefore, then, should any, howsoever unworthy, be rooted out of the Church's fellowship and excluded from the covenanted operation of heavenly grace? "They are in the field," says St. Augustine; "and it may be that those who to-day are darnel may be wheat to-morrow." And even so remonstrated Samuel Rutherfurd with the zealots of his day who would have "shut the gates of the Lord's calling" upon all who were not, in their judgment, chosen to salvation. "We look," said he, "upon this visible church, though black and spotted, as the hospital and guest-house of the sick, halt, maimed and withered, over which Christ is Lord-physician and Master; and we would wait upon these that are not yet in Christ, as our Lord waited upon us and you both."

Our Lord's Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven—the regeneration of humanity and the winning of the world for God—might well seem to His contemporaries a wild dream; and to His Apostles it might seem that in sending them forth to preach it He was imposing upon them a hopeless task. But great things have ever small beginnings; and this lesson He teaches in the parable of the Mustard-Seed (vers. 31, 32). The luxuriant vegetation by the Lakeside included mustard-plants, which in that almost tropical climate grew very large. They attained a height of over ten feet, and their berries attracted swarms of birds. The mustard-plant was "the greatest of all herbs," quite "a tree"; yet curiously its seed was "the smallest of all seeds" (cf. Mk. iv. 31, 32), insomuch that "a grain of mustard-seed" was proverbial of something very small, the merest trifle (cf. Mt. xvii. 20).

Great things have ever small beginnings; and in His parable of the Leaven (ver. 33) our Lord teaches the companion lesson that nothing great, nothing enduring, is ever sudden. Leaven works gradually, slowly but surely permeating the mass. "It

appears," says Sir Walter, "to be a general rule that what is to last long should be slowly matured and gradually improved, while every sudden effort, however gigantic, to bring about the speedy execution of a plan calculated to endure for ages is doomed to exhibit symptoms of premature decay from its very commencement."

Here closes the report of the discourse by the Lake; and ere passing on the Evangelist, ever solicitous to commend our Lord to his Jewish readers as their promised Saviour, points out a prophetic parallel to His parabolic teaching. He quotes the prelude to the seventy-eighth psalm, that long recital of God's historic dealings with His people of old. "I will open my mouth in a parable," says the Psalmist; "I will utter dark sayings of old," more literally "enigmas from of old" or, according to the Evangelist's apt rendering, "things kept secret" or "hidden from the foundation of the world." It is the phrase which St. Paul had in view when he spoke of "mysteries hidden from the ages." A mystery meant "a secret"; and in the theological parlance of the Apostle it denoted a providential purpose long hidden but at length gloriously manifested in Christ (cf. Rom. xvi. 25, 26; Eph. i. 9, iii. 5, 9; Col. i. 26). And this is the thought of the Evangelist here. Even as the Psalmist of old had discovered to his people the gracious meaning of God's dealings, often dark and mysterious, with their fathers, so by His parables our Lord revealed to His hearers unnoticed significances in common and familiar things.

> The simplest sights we met—
> The Sower flinging seed on loam and rock;
> The darnel in the wheat; the mustard-tree
> That hath its seed so little, and its boughs
> Widespreading; and the wandering sheep; and nets
> Shot in the wimpled waters,—drawing forth
> Great fish and small:—these, and a hundred such,
> Seen by us daily, never seen aright,
> Were pictures for Him from the page of life,
> Teaching by parable.

5. *EXPLANATIONS TO THE TWELVE*

xiii. 36–52

36 *Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.*

37 *He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;*

38 *The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*

39 *The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*

40 *As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.*

41 *The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all *things that offend, and them which do iniquity;*

42 *And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

43 *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

44 *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*

45 *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls:*

46 *Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

47 *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:*

* Or, *scandals*.

48 *Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.*

49 *So shall it be at the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,*

50 *And shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

51 *Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things ? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.*

52 *Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

IT would be late when our Lord dismissed the multitude and retired to His lodging in Peter's house hard by. All the Twelve accompanied Him thither that they might discuss what they had heard. It was here that He gave His exposition of the parable of the Sower (cf. vers. 10–23), and He now proceeds to explain that of the Tares among the Wheat. It is significant that they requested an explanation thereof. Evidently He had deemed none necessary in view of His previous exposition ; but, ever patient with their slowness of heart, He vouchsafed a precise interpretation in terms of the familiar imagery of the prophetic scriptures (cf. Joel iii. 12, 13 ; Zech. xiv. 5 R.V.), especially bearing upon their apostolic mission. Observe these significant details. (1) The Sower, He says, is the Son of Man, reminding them for their encouragement that in their sowing they were doing His work, and if only they were faithful, the result lay with Him (cf. 1 Cor. iii. 6). And so, when He tells them that the reapers are the angels, He would have them realise that, whatever earthly opposition they might encounter, the powers of Heaven were their allies. (2) As the disciples of the prophets were called " the sons of the prophets," so here " the sons (R.V.) of the Kingdom " are the disciples of the Kingdom (cf. ver. 52) and " the sons of the Evil One " (R.V.) are his disciples, imbued with his spirit and serving his ends. (3) " The harvest is " not " the end of the

world" but "the consummation of the age" (R.V. marg.). The course of history was conceived as a succession of "ages," stages in the working out of the divine purposes to their final and glorious consummation. (4) "The furnace of fire," the proper receptacle of weeds and rubbish (cf. iii. 12, vii. 19; Jo. xv. 6), figuratively signifies, like "the Gehenna of fire" (v. 22), the destiny of such as by obdurate impenitence have sinned away the very possibility of amendment and made themselves nothing else than moral refuse. Their misery lies in their recognition, too late, of the blessedness which might have been theirs but which they are now incapable of attaining. "There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth"—"the hell," in George Eliot's phrase, "of conscious moral and intellectual weakness." This is no theological imagination but a grim truth which moralists have, often terribly, enforced. "The very Substance of the Soul," as Addison has it, "is fester'd with them, the Gangrene is gone too far to be ever cured; the Inflammation will rage to all Eternity. In this therefore (say the Platonists) consists the Punishment of a voluptuous Man after Death: He is tormented with Desires which it is impossible for him to gratify, solicited by a Passion that has neither Objects nor Organs adapted to it: He lives in a State of invincible Desire and Impotence, and always burns in the Pursuit of what he always despairs to possess." "Why need we talk of a fiery hell?" says Coleridge. "If the will, which is the law of our nature, were withdrawn from our memory, fancy, understanding, and reason, no other hell could equal, for a spiritual being, what we should then feel, from the anarchy of our powers. It would be conscious madness—a horrid thought!"

Continuing His converse with the Twelve, He sought to fortify their resolution against the misgivings which even then assailed them (cf. xix. 27) and would assail them yet more fiercely when He was gone. Sacrifice is ever painful, and more and more amid their sufferings for the Gospel's sake they would be tempted to lose heart and, wistfully remembering their peaceful homes and dear human affections, regret their abandonment thereof in the flush of a high enthusiasm. And so by

two parables—hardly indeed parables but picturesque and appealing similitudes needing no interpretation—He assures them of the incomparable preciousness of the Kingdom of Heaven, that prize for which the world were well lost. (1) It was the fashion of old in unsettled times for men to bury their treasures, marking the spot and unearthing them when the danger was past. Indeed the fashion persisted until the panic of the Dutch War when the enemy's ships entered quite recent times, and Pepys tells in his *Diary* how during the Thames and their guns were heard in London, he buried his gold. He unearthed it by and by, but often the owner perished and his hoard lay hid until some lucky wight chanced upon it.

> Did some man find
> Hid shekels in a field,—old buried gold
> Forgot of mouldering owner in the tomb—
> And buy the field, selling, for joy thereof,
> All that he had? He made us therefore see
> How sweet it is to want all sweetnesses,
> Winning the Sweetest; and how cheap to own
> What's priceless at a price; how light to part
> With all we clove to once, gaining thereby
> The treasure of the Kingdom.

(2) Capernaum was a station on the *Via Maris* (cf. exposition of iv. 12–16), frequented by caravans laden with the traffic of the gorgeous East. Here is a merchant exulting in a rare treasure—no bales of silk or caskets of spicery but a single pearl,

> one moonlight gem,
> Fished fortunate in Ormuz, or by reef,
> Deadly and ragged, of the Sea of Suph;
> Meet to adorn the neck of Cæsar's wife.

A single pearl, but worth a king's ransom in the Western market; and when he lighted on it in his quest, he gladly bartered for it all the accumulation of his merchandise, "flinging aside small pearls for great."

It proves how important is the lesson of the parable of the Tares among the Wheat and how solicitous He was that the

Twelve should lay it to heart that He now reiterates it in another parable, specially appealing to His fisher disciples—the parable of the Net (vers. 47–50), properly sweep-net, a long net which, when its extended ends were drawn together, enclosed all, good and bad, within its compass. What is the lesson which He thus reiterates, not alone by the parable but by His interpretation thereof? It is the duty of patience with the present intermingling of evil and good in view of the final discrimination at "the consummation of the age." It is a lesson at once of mercy and of judgment: of mercy since it tells of God's long-suffering with sinners, and of judgment since it proclaims how terrible is the ultimate doom of obdurate impenitence. And is it not indeed an impressive fact that the most awful declarations of Holy Scripture in this regard were uttered by the lips of our Blessed Lord? It was He that spoke of some who at the Final Assize will be mere moral refuse, fit only to be cast into the fire and burned. He recognised too the dread possibility of its being better for a man if he had never been born (Mt. xxvi. 24). And He spoke of a sin which hath never forgiveness (xii. 32). This is immeasurably awful language; but we miss its primary significance and purport unless we perceive that these and kindred declarations are not threats of what God will do to sinners but pitiful and poignant warnings against the ruin and misery which sin entails here and hereafter. Holy Scripture constantly affirms that sin is the enemy of our souls, a terrible, malignant, and fatal foe, and God is our Friend, ever eager to snatch us from its grip and deliver us from its dire dominion. It is not God that we have to fear but sin, and Scripture is one long proclamation of His redeeming compassion, His power and His desire to save us, and the welcome which awaits us when we flee to Him and lay hold on His mercy. If any perish, it is because he would not let God save him, because he would not hearken to God's appeal. "How often would I, and ye would not! Therefore your house is left unto you desolate."

Hence it appears that our Lord's severity is but the other side of His mercy. It is nothing else than the importunity of His love, apprising us of the awfulness of sin and the inevitable

disaster which it entails, and admonishing us of our continual need of the aids of heavenly grace if we would avoid irreparable loss. "Loss"—this is indeed the scriptural and proper term, expressing the very reality. Sin means loss, eternal loss; and it is a pernicious fiction that one may sin and then by timely repentance put all to rights. The grim fact is that the past is irrevocable and, as the Greek poet put it, "the gods themselves cannot undo what has once been done." "Can one ever," asks George MacDonald, "bring up arrears of duty? Can one ever make up for wrong done? Will not heaven be an endless repentance?" "It's well," says George Eliot, "we should feel as life's a reckoning we can't make twice over; there's no real making amends in this world, any more nor you can mend a wrong subtraction by doing your addition right." A lost opportunity is irretrievable. It is gone for ever, and with it the enrichment which it offered. And a sin once committed can never be cancelled. It may be repented of and forgiven by God and man; but the fact stands, the record remains, and no tears can ever blot it out. There is a radical falsehood in a theology which teaches that a sinner has only to repent, even at the last moment, and his evil past will be obliterated, and he will be placed where he would have been had he never sinned. This makes salvation a sort of magic, equally irrational and unreal. The truth is exemplified by the experience of St. Paul. His sin was indeed forgiven, but the fact remained that he had once been a persecutor, and all his days he remembered it with bitter regret and burning shame. The loss of sin, even sin repented of and forgiven, is eternal; and it is well that we should lay this to heart and welcome betimes the grace which is able to keep us from falling. Cleansing is a blessed reality, and it is offered to the foulest sinner; but better far to be kept pure. And, since this is their admonition, such stern passages of the Gospel as confront us here are truly reckoned among the most gracious of our Saviour's words.

In this converse between our Lord and the Twelve we see Him engaged in the task of their instruction in "the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven," their preparation for the ministry which awaited them when He was gone. He has been showing

them what manner of teachers they should be; and now in closing He points the lesson. "Have ye understood—have ye taken in all these things?" He asked; and when they answered, "Yea," "Well then," said He, "practise what you have learned," and with a few graphic strokes and not without a touch of that humour which He employed in familiar intercourse, He sketches the exemplar of a Christian teacher, designating him "a Scribe made a disciple to the Kingdom of Heaven" (R.V.) in contrast with a Jewish Scribe or Rabbi who was a disciple of the Law, and comparing him to "a man that is a householder"—no churl or ill provided like that householder in the parable (cf. Lk. xi. 5–8) who, when a friend came to his door at midnight, had to borrow bread, but a generous host with enough and to spare in his hospitable house, who "bringeth forth out of his treasure" or rather "flingeth forth out of his store," with lavish hand and lusty joviality, "things new and old," yesterday's superfluity and the morrow's provision.

Here our Lord picturesquely specifies two characteristics of a true Christian teacher—the sort of teacher that He would have His Apostles be. (1) He should have a well furnished mind, replete with heavenly lore and eager to communicate the blessed truths which have gladdened his own heart.

I love to tell the story:
More wonderful it seems
Than all the golden fancies
Of all my golden dreams.
I love to tell the story:
It did so much for me:
And that is just the reason
I tell it now to thee.

(2) In the Christian teacher's store there are "things new and old." Hereof our Lord has just furnished an example in His teaching by parables; for what was that teaching but a discovery of unnoticed meanings in familiar things? True originality is ever the transfiguration of the commonplace, the setting of old truths in a new light. The Fathers took "things new and old" as denoting the Old and New Testaments; and

St. Chrysostom aptly illustrates our Lord's meaning by the example on the one hand of the Jewish Rabbis, those blind traditionalists who clung to the ancient revelation and rejected the larger truth of the Gospel, and on the other of the Marcionite heretics, who rejected the Old Testament Scriptures, holding that there were two Gods—the Just God of the Jews revealed in the Law and the Good God, the Heavenly Father, revealed in Christ. The Scribes brought forth out of their treasure only "things old," and the Marcionites only "things new." The true Christian teacher brings forth both. For he reverences the past and prizes the rich and ever-growing heritage of truth bequeathed from generation to generation; and at the same time, recognising the abiding ministration of the Holy Spirit who, according to the Lord's promise, ever guides the faithful into a larger and deeper understanding of His infinite revelation, he welcomes the fresh light which is continually breaking from the Eternal Word.

VISIT TO NAZARETH

xiii. 53–58

53 *And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.*

54 *And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?*

55 *Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?*

56 *And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?*

57 *And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.*

58 *And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

"IF a man," says Dickens, "would commit an inexpiable offence against any society, large or small, let him be successful"; and it was a Jewish proverb, which our Lord fully proved in His own experience (cf. Jo. iv. 44), that "a prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house." It is not the prophet's fault but his countrymen's, who in resenting a merit which they are incapable of emulating unwittingly confess their own insignificance. While He dwelt among them, our Lord had ample evidence of His townsfolk's ungracious disposition, which made them a byword in the land (cf. Jo. i. 46); and therefore not only did He remove from their midst when He entered on His Galilean ministry and fix His abode at Capernaum (cf. Mt. iv. 13) but for over a year, though He made several excursions through Galilee, He never revisited Nazareth. He knew how His claims were regarded there, even by His kinsfolk (cf. Mk. iii. 21), and He

would not meanwhile court unprofitable vexation by adventuring Himself among them.

Still He had them in His heart and would fain win them; and now well on in the second year of His ministry, when His fame had been established and it was reasonable to expect that their prejudice had been overcome and they would hearken to His message, He pays them a visit. During His stay He wrought several miracles of healing, and on the Sabbath He attended the synagogue and preached. It was a gracious discourse, and St. Luke (cf. iv. 16–30) tells of the impression which it created and the scene of violence which ensued; but St. Matthew like St. Mark (cf. vi. 1–6) merely records the invincible prejudice of His hearers and the consequent frustration of His grace. What was it that closed their hearts against Him? Had He been a stranger, they would have applauded Him, but they knew His human antecedents. "Is not this," they murmured, "the carpenter's son?" So at all events it is written in our text, but St. Mark (cf. vi. 3) has: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" showing that our Lord had Himself worked as a carpenter at Nazareth, earning the family's livelihood after the death of His foster-father Joseph. So indeed the question ran; and the proof is that by and by pagans, like the philosopher Celsus, regarding manual toil as servile, derided the Christian adoration of an artisan. St. Matthew's reading is a concealment of this reproach; and it is remarkable that in several manuscripts St. Mark's text is similarly modified. "Is not this the carpenter," sneered the Nazarenes, "the son of Mary?" and their mention only of her indicates that Joseph was now dead and forgotten. What animated them was miserable jealousy that they should have been thus outdistanced by one of themselves, one who, as St. Justin Martyr has it, had once made their ploughs and yokes. And it was aggravated by the presence of His "brethren and sisters" in their midst. They grudged their neighbours the honour which their kinsman's distinction reflected upon them. And therefore they turned against Him, and none in Nazareth were the better for His visit save a few sick folk whose hearts affliction had opened to His grace (cf. Mk. vi. 5).

THE EXECUTION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

xiv. 1–12

1 *At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,*

2 *And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works *do shew forth themselves in him.*

3 *For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.*

4 *For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.*

5 *And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.*

6 *But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced †before them, and pleased Herod.*

7 *Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.*

8 *And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.*

9 *And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.*

10 *And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.*

11 *And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel; and she brought it to her mother.*

12 *And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.*

IT is a singular paradox that infidelity and superstition invariably go hand in hand. "The incredulous," observed Blaise Pascal, "are the most credulous. They believe in the miracles of Vespasian to escape believing in those of Moses."

* Or, *are wrought by him.* † Gr. *in the midst.*

King Louis XI, so faithless and false, venerated with grovelling devotion the little leaden images of the Virgin and saints wherewith his hatband was garnished ; and it is told of the Marquess D'Argens, the favourite of Frederic the Great, that "hating Christianity with a rancour which made him incapable of rational inquiry, unable to see in the harmony and beauty of the universe the traces of divine power and wisdom, he was the slave of dreams and omens, would not sit down to table with thirteen in company, turned pale if the salt fell towards him, begged his guests not to cross their knives and forks on their plates, and would not for the world commence a journey on Friday." And what of the Romans in the imperial age ? While making a jest of the deities of the old mythology, they were the pitiful dupes of sorcerers, necromancers, astrologers, and all the filthy horde of Oriental charlatans.

Look at Herod Antipas, that son of Herod the Great who on the division of the kingdom by Augustus was set with the title of Tetrarch over Galilee and Peræa. Some eighteen months ago he had arrested John the Baptist and imprisoned him in his castle of Machærûs on the east of the Dead Sea, and recently, against his better judgment, he had executed him. And now when he hears of our Lord's wonderful doings in Galilee, what is the thought which presents itself to his guilty mind ? He was a Sadducee (cf. Mt. xvi. 6 with Mk. viii. 15), believing in neither resurrection nor angel nor spirit (cf. Ac. xxiii. 8), yet he leaped to the conclusion that his blood-bolter'd victim had been raised from the dead to haunt his miserable soul. It is indeed no wonder that he was thus shaken by superstitious alarm ; for the Baptist's execution was but the climax of a train of crimes which lay heavy on his conscience. During a visit to Rome he had been hospitably entertained by his half-brother Herod Philip, a son of Herod the Great by his fifth wife Mariamne—a different person, be it observed, from his other half-brother Philip, the Tetrarch of Ituræa and Trachonitis (cf. Lk. iii. 1), King Herod's son by his seventh wife Cleopatra—and, though already married to a daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, he was enamoured of his hostess Herodias. An ambitious and heartless woman, she welcomed his approaches, since her

husband Philip, disinherited by his father, was merely a private citizen in the imperial capital ; and she agreed to desert him and marry the Tetrarch on condition of his divorcing the daughter of Aretas.

It was a foul iniquity, and the Baptist fearlessly denounced it. With characteristic *laissez-faire* Antipas would have let him alone, but Herodias, ever his evil genius, was incensed and at her instigation the prophet was arrested. Had she got her way, he would have been doomed out of hand, but Antipas, dreading the storm of popular resentment which the outrage would have excited, and moreover, as St. Mark explains (cf. vi. 19, 20), conscience-stricken by the exposure of his sin, compromised the matter by consigning him to a dungeon in his secluded castle of Machærûs. There he lay those eighteen months ; and now Herodias achieves by craft her long-cherished purpose of revenge. It was the Tetrarch's birthday or perhaps rather the anniversary of his accession (cf. Ps. ii. 6, 7), and with his wonted assumption of kingly majesty he was celebrating the occasion with a state-banquet at Machærûs. During the feast an unexpected diversion was introduced by Herodias. She had by her deserted husband Philip a daughter named Salome, afterwards the wife of the Tetrarch Philip ; and the girl, a princess though she was, entered in the guise of a *danseuse*. The guests were delighted, and the maudlin Tetrarch, after the manner of an Oriental potentate (cf. Esth. v. 6), pledged himself with an oath to grant her whatever petition she might prefer "even to the half of the kingdom" (cf. Mk. vi. 23). She hastened from the banquet-hall and consulted with her mother, and presently returned with her request—John the Baptist's head on a trencher, served, says St. Chrysostom, like some dainty viand. The atrocious demand sobered Antipas. In spite of his oath he should have refused it.

> It is great sin to swear unto a sin,
> But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.
> Who can be bound by any solemn vow
> To do a murderous deed . . . ,
> And have no other reason for this wrong
> But that he was bound by a solemn oath?

But in those days an oath was regarded with superstitious awe, and here again the Tetrarch rendered to superstition the homage which he denied to God. An "executioner" (cf. Mk. vi. 27), a *speculator*, one of the ruffians whom after the fashion of a tyrant of old (cf. Mt. ii. 16) he retained in his service for work like this, was despatched to the dungeon on the bloody errand. It evinces his compunction that the disciples of the Baptist, including doubtless the two whom he had recently sent to submit his question to our Lord (cf. xi. 2), were permitted to remove his headless corpse and give it reverent burial. It is said that they conveyed it to Sebaste, the capital of Samaria, and interred it there. It was indeed a fit resting-place for the last of the Hebrew Prophets, since not only was it near Ænon, the scene of his later ministry, but it was the burial-place of the ancient prophets, Elisha and Obadiah ; and though the soil of Samaria was unclean in Jewish eyes, it was beyond the jurisdiction of the rulers who had persecuted him and done him to death.

ANOTHER RETREAT ACROSS THE LAKE (xiv. 13–33)

1. *THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND*

xiv. 13–21

13 *When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.*

14 *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.*

15 *And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.*

16 *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.*

17 *And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.*

18 *He said, Bring them hither to me.*

19 *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.*

20 *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.*

21 *And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.*

THEN even as now in times of trouble, "when other helpers fail and comforts flee," the hearts of men turned to Jesus; and after they had performed their mournful office the Baptist's disciples hastened northward and told Him the story. It deeply moved Him not alone by the pity of it but by its personal presage, admonishing Him as

it did of His own like doom (cf. Mt. xvii. 12). He had no heart to continue at Capernaum amid the clamorous multitude and the malignant Scribes ; and He embarked with the Twelve and set sail for the other side of the Lake, that there in " a desert " or rather " lonely place " they might " rest a while " (cf. Mk. vi. 31). And not merely that they might rest a while but that He might in quiet converse reveal to them something of the significance of His own impending Passion ; and so important was the lesson which He taught them afterwards justly accounted, however imperfectly the disciples may have appreciated it at the moment, that the story is recounted by all the Evangelists, each contributing some peculiar elucidation (cf. Mk. vi. 30–44 ; Lk. ix. 10–17 ; Jo. vi. 1–14).

Their destination was the fertile and well-watered champaign which skirted the north-eastern shore of the Lake, adjacent to the town of Bethsaida Julias (cf. Lk. ix. 10). The multitude was loath to part with Him ; and, observing whither the boat steered, a great crowd, composed not merely of the people of Capernaum but of others from neighbouring towns who had come thither to hear Him and some of them to be healed of their sicknesses, followed Him on foot round the head of the Lake. St. Matthew's narrative is here somewhat compressed, and when we read that " He went forth and saw a great multitude," we might naturally understand that they had outdistanced Him and were waiting for Him when He disembarked ; but observe how St. John defines the situation (cf. vi. 3, 5). The road round the head of the Lake was a long and weary detour of some six miles, and since the boat sped swiftly, He arrived long before them. On landing He betook Himself with the Twelve to the seclusion of the uplands ; and it was as He sat there discoursing to them that He espied that vast throng of " about five thousand men, beside women and children," trooping along the plain in quest of Him. It was indeed an unwelcome intrusion, since He had come thither to be alone with the Twelve ; and He might easily have evaded it by remaining in His upland retreat. But none ever sought Him in vain, none ever came to Him and was cast out ; and the spectacle of those weary folk, many of them feeble with sickness, stirred His compassion, and He

" went forth," He quitted His retreat, and " welcomed them " (Lk. ix. 11 R.V.).

He not only healed their sick but discoursed to them at length of the Kingdom of God (cf. Mk. vi. 34 ; Lk. ix. 11) until evening was closing in ; and then the disciples interposed. They pointed out that the folk were hungry, since in their haste they had left home unprovided, and urged Him to dismiss them to procure food as they might in the neighbouring hamlets. The Master, however, was otherwise minded. He would turn the occasion to a high end by disclosing thereby to the Twelve the mystery of His redeeming Passion. He bade them produce the scanty provision available—five loaves and two fishes. The plain was covered with a rich carpet of green grass, since, as St. John explains (cf. vi. 4), it was now springtime toward the season of Passover which fell that year (28 A.D.) on March 29 ; and He bade the multitude recline on the pleasant sward. Then He took the loaves and fishes and after blessing them portioned them out to His disciples for distribution. It was a scanty provision, but by the power of the Creator it multiplied in His hands and afforded a plenteous meal for that vast company—not merely enough but enough and to spare, insomuch that the remainder filled the baskets which the Twelve carried after the fashion of Jewish travellers who always took with them a store of food when they went abroad lest they should be defiled by eating Gentile meat.

For the distressed multitude the miracle was indeed a work of mercy, but it had also, especially for the Twelve, a larger purpose. And what this was appears from our Lord's manner in the distribution of the provision. Observe how it is written, not alone by St. Matthew but similarly by the other Evangelists (cf. Mk. vi. 41 ; Lk. ix. 16 ; Jo. vi. 11), that " He took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to the disciples." It is the very language which depicts the scene in the Upper Room a year later, when He instituted the sacred feast which is at once a commemoration and an interpretation of the death which He died for the life of the world (cf. Mt. xxvi. 26 ; Mk. xiv. 22 ; Lk. xxii. 19 ; 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24). The miracle was an anticipation

thereof, instilling into the disciples' minds an idea which, unintelligible at the moment, would be illumined by the dread experience. Nor did He leave His purpose doubtful; for next day in the synagogue of Capernaum He unfolded the significance of the miracle in that profound discourse which St. John has preserved (vi. 22–59) on the Living Bread—His flesh which is true meat and His blood which is true drink.

2. *WALKING ON THE WATER*

xiv. 22–36

22 *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.*

23 *And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.*

24 *But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.*

25 *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*

26 *And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.*

27 *But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*

28 *And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*

29 *And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.*

30 *But when he saw the wind *boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*

31 *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

32 *And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.*

33 *Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

* Or, *strong*.

34 *And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.*

35 *And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;*

36 *And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

WHEREFORE did He thus hastily "constrain His disciples to get into a ship" or rather "to embark in the boat"—the boat which had conveyed them across the Lake and was now moored at the landing-place? Here again St. John intervenes with an illuminative comment (cf. Jo. vi. 15). As we have seen, it was a puzzle to our Lord's disciples, not only the Twelve but all whom His miracles had persuaded of His Messiahship, wherefore He was so tardy in manifesting Himself in His rightful majesty and claiming the throne of His father David. And now toward the close of the second year of His public ministry they had lost patience and a wild plot was afoot among them to force His hand. The project was that at the approaching Passover when the Holy City would be thronged with worshippers from near and far, they should acclaim Him King of Israel and set Him on the throne. Hence the suppressed excitement which, as St. Mark observes (cf. vi. 31), had prevailed lately in Capernaum. Our Lord had perceived and understood it, and not only would it confirm His resolution to withdraw to the other side of the Lake but it explains why so great a multitude pursued Him thither. His miracle prompted the leaders of the movement to immediate action, and they were minded to precipitate the *dénouement* by seizing Him and there and then acclaiming Him King.

It was a recurrence of the temptation which had assailed Him in the wilderness at the outset of His ministry, when a vision of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them was presented to His imagination (cf. iv. 8–10); and, decisively conquered then, it had no allurement for Him now. The Twelve were privy to the design; and therefore it was that

He insisted on their immediate embarkation. Their departure gave pause to their fellow conspirators, and He availed Himself of their confusion to steal away to His upland retreat. There He gave Himself to prayer; and so rapt was He in heavenly communion that He never noticed the rise of one of those sudden tempests so frequent on the Lake after a sultry day (cf. viii. 24), until, says the Evangelist, "the evening was come." How could this be? Already it has been written (cf. ver. 15) that "it was the evening" when He wrought the miracle. In the original it is the same phrase in both instances, literally "when it had grown late." In the former instance it signifies "late in the day" and here "late in the night." It was "the fourth watch of the night" (3–6 a.m.); and on rising from His knees and looking down on the Lake He descried the boat only some half way across battling against a head wind from the west. He quitted His retreat, and presently in the dim light of dawn the disciples saw Him approaching over the storm-tossed water. They naturally, after the fashion of their time, took Him for "a spirit," literally "a phantasm" or "apparition" (cf. Lk. xxiv. 37). The ancient belief, which continued long, was that a ghost would pass harmless unless it was accosted; and when a Jew met an acquaintance by night, he gave him no greeting lest it should be an evil spirit in his likeness. Hence the disciples did not greet the Master, but they could not suppress a cry of alarm. "Courage!" said He. "It is I: be not afraid." How characteristic of Peter (cf. Jo. xxi. 7) is the ensuing incident which St. Matthew alone records! It was the eagerness of his impulsive heart to welcome the dear Master that prompted him; yet there was not lacking an *arrière pensée* of incredulity: "Lord, if it be Thou——".

Those tempests on the Lake were sudden and short-lived, and now "the wind ceased" or "sank to rest." It is the same word as St. Mark uses in his story of the stilling of the previous tempest (cf. iv. 39); but it is not added here that "there ensued a great calm," indicating that in this instance there was no miracle. None was needed; for what He had already done had taught the lesson which our Lord designed. When the Evangelist says that not "the disciples" but "they that were

in the boat came and worshipped Him," he evidently means that there were others in the boat besides the disciples, doubtless some of the multitude who were glad of an easy passage homeward. What they had witnessed confirmed their conviction that He was indeed " the Son of God," that is, the Messiah (cf. iii. 17) ; but it was a far deeper truth that He was seeking to lodge in their minds. His miracle of the feeding of the multitude was a revelation of the significance of His Passion ; and what of His miracle of walking on the water ? It was a premonition of His Resurrection. Even as afterwards on the Mount of Transfiguration, so now on the storm-tossed Lake His mortal body was clothed with immortality ; " the body of His humiliation " became " the body of His glory " (cf. Phil. iii. 21), the body wherewith He was manifested during the forty days betwixt His Resurrection and His Ascension and which He wears evermore at God's right hand. And thus, interrupted though it was, that retreat across the Lake in no wise missed its purpose. For by those two startling miracles He testified beforehand, to such as had eyes to see and hearts to understand, of His sufferings and the glory that should follow.

CEREMONIAL ABLUTION

XV. 1–20

1 *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,*

2 *Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.*

3 *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*

4 *For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.*

5 *But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;*

6 *And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*

7 *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,*

8 *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*

9 *But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

10 *And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:*

11 *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

12 *Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?*

13 *But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*

14 *Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

15 *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.*

16 *And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?*

17 *Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?*

18 *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*

19 *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:*

20 *These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*

THE popular enthusiasm which the fame of those two miracles excited in Capernaum and its vicinity, exasperated our Lord's adversaries; and now those Scribes who had come down as commissioners of the Sanhedrin (cf. xii. 24; Mk. iii. 22), make a fresh attack upon Him. It was a requirement of "the Tradition of the Elders," that is, the Unwritten Law so venerated by the Pharisees, that a Jew should wash his hands before eating to purge them of the defilement of contact with things ceremonially unclean; and its stringency is aptly exemplified by a story of Rabbi Akiba, so celebrated for his religious and patriotic zeal. He was executed for complicity in the rebellion under the Emperor Hadrian; and one morning during his imprisonment, when he would have washed his hands, the disciple who waited on him told him that there was scarce enough water for drinking. "What matters it?" he replied. "It is better for me to die than transgress the commandments of the Elders." The Scribes had seen some of our Lord's disciples at meat (cf. Mk. vii. 2), and observing that they neglected this punctilious rite, they challenged Him: "Why do Thy disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders?" A ceremonial discussion would merely have played into their hands, and He rather met them with a counter-challenge: "Why do *ye* trangress the commandment of God because of your Tradition?" And then He produced a flagrant example.

The mischief of the Rabbinical theologising was that by its

elaboration of the precepts of the Law, as in the case of Sabbath-observance (cf. xii. 1–8), it made the latter an oppressive burden. It was moreover practically impossible to fulfil the multitude of minute and vexatious requirements, and the inevitable consequence was that these were perforce evaded by a system of subtle casuistry which induced a relaxation of moral obligation. Here is an example. "Honour thy father and thy mother" (cf. Ex. xx. 12) was a divine commandment sanctioned by the instinct of natural affection and recognised even by the heathen who had no Law; for was it not an ordinance of Solon the Athenian legislator: "If any nourish not his parents, let him be dishonoured"? Yet how was it treated by the Rabbinical casuists? In their treatise on *Vows* they enunciated the principle that if one took an oath to give anything to a robber or a publican, he might afterwards declare it, though it were not, the property of the priests or the king, and then he could retain it without violation of his oath. Once a principle is established, it is capable of wide application, and it was thence inferred that if one's aid were solicited by his father or his mother in their need, he had only to say: "That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God" (R.V.), and he was absolved from the commandment. Thus by the aid of their Tradition they invested with a guise of devotion an inhumanity which the Divine Law accounted a capital crime (cf. Ex. xxi. 17), incurring the heavy condemnation pronounced by the prophet of old (cf. Is. xxix. 13).

It was a crushing retort, and turning scornfully from them He told the bystanders what is the ablution that God requires —not clean hands but clean hearts. Silenced but wrathful the Scribes took their departure. Their Master's boldness alarmed the Twelve, knowing as they did how powerful His adversaries were; and they remonstrated with Him on the risk He was running. He stood unshaken. What could they do, those champions of a doomed cause—a plant which God had not planted. "Supposing," said Oliver Cromwell in his fourth speech to the first Protectorate Parliament, "this Cause or this Business must be carried on, it is either of God or of man. If it be of man, I would I had never touched it with a finger.

If I had not had a hope fixed in me that this Cause and this Business was of God, I would many years ago have run from it. If it be of God, He will bear it up. If it be of man, it will tumble ; as every thing that hath been of man since the world began hath done. And what are all our Histories, and other Traditions of Actions in former times, but God manifesting Himself, that He hath shaken and tumbled down, and trampled upon, every thing that He had not planted ? " " Let them alone " or rather " Let them go ! " He cried, surveying His retreating assailants. " They are blind guides." Well for His hearers if they remembered the proverb that " if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit " (R.V.).

On getting home with the Twelve (cf. Mk. vii. 17) He conversed with them after His wont on His public discourse, and Peter propounded a question which was perplexing them. " Declare unto us the parable " said he, meaning that aphorism of our Lord (ver. 11) that it is not what goes into the mouth but what comes out of it—not what he eats but what he thinks and speaks—that defiles a man. It was not a parable at all ; and their bewilderment shows how their minds still clung to Jewish ceremonialism. So difficult is it to change men's ideas ; and notwithstanding the Master's patient explanation Peter long retained his prejudice against unclean meats, and even a heavenly vision hardly sufficed to eradicate it (cf. Ac. x. 9–16 ; Gal. ii. 12).

RETREAT TO PHŒNICIA

xv. 21–28

21 *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.*

22 *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.*

23 *But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away ; for she crieth after us.*

24 *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

25 *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.*

26 *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.*

27 *And she said, Truth, Lord : yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*

28 *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

OUR Lord's purpose of finding on the eastern shore of the Lake a quiet retreat where He might converse with the Twelve had been defeated by the persistence of the multitude in pursuing Him thither. But the business of their instruction in the mysteries of His Kingdom was urgent, and He must seek an opportunity elsewhere. Whither should He turn? Neither on the eastern shore nor westward in the teeming inlands of Galilee could He now find seclusion. He left Capernaum and, travelling northward, passed the frontier of the Holy Land and, entering Phœnicia, found a lodging there (cf. Mk. vii. 24). It was a heathen country. The people were "Greeks" (cf. Mk. vii. 26), that is, Gentiles, "Canaanites,"

descendants of the sinful race which the Israelites under Joshua had dispossessed. It was reasonable to expect that He would there be unknown, and enjoy a season of uninterrupted converse with His disciples.

Herein, however, He was disappointed. Visitors from that country had witnessed His miracles in Galilee and carried home a report (cf. Mk. iii. 8), and " He could not be hid " (Mk. vii. 24). Tidings of His arrival spread abroad, and presently, while He was walking with His disciples, a suppliant appeared—a woman, a widow according to one ancient manuscript. She had a lunatic daughter (cf. viii. 28), and knowing how He had healed such in Galilee, she hoped that He would have mercy on her child. His treatment of her is at the first glance very surprising. The Jews abhorred the Gentiles. They accounted them unclean outcasts and branded them as " uncircumcised dogs " ; and it seems as though He shared this cruel prejudice. He began by ignoring her. It appears from a comparison of St. Mark's narrative (vii. 24–30) that He turned His steps towards His lodging ; but she followed Him and kept urging her prayer. Still He took no notice, and the disciples with their Jewish antipathy were annoyed and besought Him to grant her request and so get rid of her. " My mission," said He, recalling their own temporarily limited mission (cf. Mt. x. 6), " is to none but the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

And so they went on and reached the house. But they did not escape the suppliant. According to the true reading in St. Mark's narrative (vii. 25) " she entered in." It appears that the evening meal was spread, and as He reclined at table, she " fell at His feet " like the woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee (cf. Lk. vii. 38) and cried " Lord, help me." Then at length He took notice of her. " It is not meet," said He, " to take the children's bread and cast it to " not " dogs " but " the dogs." We miss His meaning unless we understand that He is here quoting a common proverb. The word for " dogs " is here in the original a diminutive, denoting, as we learn, for example, from Æsop's Fables, the little house-dogs which sat by at meal-times, looking for scraps ; and the maxim was " First the children, then the doggies." Perhaps there

was a " doggie " in the room that evening. Here, at all events, is the meaning of our Lord's remark. He spoke gently and playfully, and she saw her opportunity and retorted with ready wit : " Yes, Lord, for even the doggies eat of the scraps that fall from their masters' table." " Observe," says Samuel Rutherfurd, " the woman's witty answer. By retortion in great quickness, by concession of the conclusion, and granting she was a dog, she borroweth the argument, and taketh it from Christ's mouth to prove her question. She argueth from the temptation : Let me be a dog, so I be a dog under Christ's feet at His table. Wisdom's scholars are not fools : Grace is a witty and understanding spirit, ripe and sharp."

Reading the story thus, we see that there was no ungraciousness in our Lord's dealing with the woman, no reluctance to succour her distress. Reluctant indeed He was to work the miracle, foreseeing that the fame of it would bring a crowd about Him and interrupt His converse with the Twelve, frustrating the purpose which had brought Him thither ; but there was in His heart no Jewish disdain of a Gentile suppliant. It was not the Jewish epithet that He used when He spoke of " dogs." And once He had proved her and found how earnest was her faith, He granted her petition regardless of the embarrassing consequences. Moreover, all through His dealing with her He was teaching the Twelve. He was breaking down their Jewish prejudice and demonstrating to them how worthy of His grace even a despised Gentile might be.

QUEST FOR A RETREAT (xv. 29–xvi. 12)

1. *THE FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND*

xv. 29–39

29 *And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.*

30 *And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:*

31 *Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.*

32 *Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.*

33 *And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?*

34 *And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.*

35 *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.*

36 *And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.*

37 *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.*

38 *And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.*

39 *And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.*

ONCE more our Lord's design had been frustrated. When the fame of the miracle was noised abroad, there was no privacy for Him in Phœnicia, and He must seek another retreat. Whither should He now turn? He travelled south-eastward till He reached Gaulanitis abreast of the Lake of Galilee, hoping that among a population mainly heathen He would be unknown. There among the uplands He found a retreat; but they had tracked Him from Phœnicia, publishing His fame by the way, and presently His retreat was invaded by an eager throng bringing all manner of sufferers. They cast their pitiful burdens at His feet, and He healed them. The wonder grew until a multitude of "four thousand men, beside women and children," had assembled. It was indeed a gracious ministry, but His engrossing concern meanwhile was the instruction of His Apostles, and for this He had no opportunity there. He must escape from the multitude and seek another retreat; but even in leaving them He would show them kindness, and He would moreover turn the situation to His disciples' profit. The folk were all weary and hungry, and some of them had "come from far" (cf. Mk. viii. 3) and would be in sore straits ere they could reach their distant homes. What should be done He asked the Twelve; and guessing from their recent experience what was in His mind, they referred the case to Him: "Whence should *we* have so much bread in" not "the" but "a wilderness?" All the provision they had in their baskets was seven loaves and a few small fishes. These they presented to Him, and He re-enacted the miracle of Bethsaida Julias, foreshadowing afresh to His disciples the mystery of His redeeming Passion, as the Evangelists here also indicate by their sacramental phraseology (cf. Mt. xv. 36; Mk. viii. 6).

The repetition of the miracle was in no wise superfluous; for it was required not only by the multitude's need of bread but by the disciples' need to be acquainted with the mystery of His Passion, which, as appears in the sequel, was so strange and incredible to their Jewish minds, obsessed as they were by the expectation of a triumphant Messiahship. He would expound the mystery to them in private converse; and, that they might not miss it, He repeated the miracle. Observe how the

Evangelists discriminate the two occasions by a significant touch. In all the four narratives of the feeding of the five thousand it is written that the fragments of the feast filled twelve "baskets" (cf. Mt. xiv. 20; Mk. vi. 43; Lk. ix. 17; Jo. vi. 13); and there, as we have seen, it is the word which designated a Jewish traveller's provision-basket. Here, where it is written that the fragments filled seven "baskets," it is, in the original, a different word. It is the word which is used of the "basket" in which Saul of Tarsus was let down by the wall of Damascus (cf. Ac. ix. 25). It signified a hamper or creel of wicker-work; and Wycliffe, rightly recognising the distinction, renders it by "leep"—an old English word which still survives in the rustic phrase "seed-leep" or "seed-lip." This multitude of Gentile folk had no provision-baskets like the Twelve, but in a rural district they would readily procure wicker leeps or hastily weave them to carry off the fragments of the feast for use on the way home.

It disquieted the Twelve when their retreat was invaded and they must seek another; and their disquietude is reflected by the confusion of the ensuing narrative. Observe an instance here. It is written that the Lord "sent away the multitude, and took ship" or rather "entered into the boat" (R.V.). What boat? Not only were they far from the Lake but, since they had come overland from the north, they had none waiting for them. Apparently He despatched several of His disciples westward to the Lake to procure a boat, and when they had extricated themselves from the multitude, He and the others followed them thither and embarked in "the boat" which they had provided. And whither did they steer? It is written in our text that He "came into the coasts" or "borders of Magdala," but here the true reading is "Magadan"; and St. Mark has "into the parts of Dalmanutha" (viii. 10). Both these names are now unknown; nor is this strange, since desiring seclusion He would betake Himself to an obscure locality. Some four miles inland from the southern end of the Lake there is a place now known as *Ed Delhemîyeh*; and possibly this is Dalmanutha, and Magadan may have been the surrounding district.

2. *REQUEST FOR A SIGN*

xvi. 1–4

1 *The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.*

2 *He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather : for the sky is red.*

3 *And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day : for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky ; but can ye not discern the signs of the times ?*

4 *A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.*

WHO were the Pharisees and Sadducees who " came " or rather " approached," " appeared on the scene," with that now familiar demand that He should " show them a sign " (cf. xii. 38), seeking to entangle Him in a damaging controversy on His Messianic claim? The narrative here is very obscure. St. Mark speaks merely of " the Pharisees " (cf. viii. 11), but presently (cf. ver. 15) he indicates that they were accompanied by Herodians, Sadducean courtiers of the Tetrarch Herod Antipas (cf. exposition of xii. 14). And he says also that they " came forth." Apparently those representatives of the rival Jewish parties, who had already formed an unnatural alliance against our Lord (cf. Mk. iii. 6), had been jealously observing His movements, and on learning that after His absence in the north He was now at Magadan within their jurisdiction they hastened thither from Capernaum and Tiberias to resume their machinations. And what was His answer? Observe (1) that not only is that satire on their skill in reading the signs of the weather and their blindness to the signs of the times (vers. 2*b*, 3) lacking in St. Mark's report but it is omitted here by the best authorities, and it is given by

St. Luke in another and evidently the historical connection (cf. xii. 54–56). (2) His refusal of their request is here (cf. ver. 4) assimilated to the answer which He made on the previous occasion when they demanded a sign (cf. xii. 39). According to St. Mark (viii. 12) it was a point-blank declinature: "There shall no sign be given unto this generation." His forbearance was exhausted, and He would reason with them no more.

3. *THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES*

xvi. 5–12

5 *And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.*

6 *Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*

7 *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.*

8 *Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?*

9 *Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?*

10 *Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?*

11 *How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?*

12 *Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*

AGAIN our Lord was driven from His retreat and must seek another. Whither should He now betake Himself? "He left them," says St. Mark (viii. 13), "and re-embarking departed to the other side," meaning that He went down to the foot of the Lake where the boat was moored which had brought Him and His company thither, and set sail for the head of the Lake, a run of some thirteen miles. "And," says St. Matthew, "the disciples came to the other side and forgot to

take bread" (R.V.). What does this mean? Is it that on disembarking they forgot to take their bread with them, leaving it in the boat? The sentence is confused, perhaps by the carelessness of copyists; and the situation is defined in St. Mark's narrative (cf. viii. 13), where we read: "He departed to the other side. And they forgot to take bread; and they had but one loaf with them in the boat." In the haste of their departure from Magadan they omitted to replenish their baskets, and not until they had set sail did they discover how scantily they were provided.

As they slipped on their way the Master discoursed to them. His mind was full of the rencontre at Magadan. It had grieved Him that Pharisees, zealous for Israel's national and religious traditions, and time-serving Sadducees should so forget their natural antagonism and ally themselves for His destruction. It was indeed a melancholy exhibition of moral obliquity and spiritual blindness; and He warned His disciples against the insidious spirit which had prompted it—a spirit, on the one side, of unreasoning bigotry and, on the other, of subservience to worldly power and greed of worldly distinction. "Beware," said He, "of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" or, as St. Mark has it, "the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" (viii. 15). At the moment they were engrossed with their shortage of supplies and, catching the word "leaven," they fancied that He was upbraiding them for their negligence. Their dullness vexed but it also amused Him, and He rallied them half playfully: Surely in fretting thus for their lack of bread they had forgotten the two miracles which they had so lately witnessed—the twelve baskets and the seven hampers full of fragments.

AT CÆSAREA PHILIPPI (xvi. 13–xvii. 23)

1. *PETER'S CONFESSION*

xvi. 13–20

13 *When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

14 *And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.*

15 *He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?*

16 *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

17 *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

18 *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

19 *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

20 *Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.*

SOME five and twenty miles north of the Lake of Galilee, on the southern slope of the range of Hermon where the Jordan has its rise, lay a town known of old as Baal-gad (cf. Josh. xi. 17, xii. 7, xiii. 5). An ancient shrine of Baal, it was consecrated under the Greek regime to Pan and renamed Paneas, the modern Banias; and afterwards when it belonged to the Tetrarchy of Philip, he adorned it and named it Cæsarea Philippi in honour of the Emperor and himself. To its neighbourhood

our Lord proceeded, and finding there the seclusion which He had sought so long, He addressed Himself to the task of instructing the Twelve and admonishing them especially of His Passion, that consummation so alien from the Jewish thought of the Messiah.

At the outset He would elicit a distinct declaration of the faith which they now held concerning Him in view of all that had come and gone since first they accepted Him as the Promised Saviour. "Who," He asked (cf. R.V.), "do men say that the Son of Man is?" They told Him the various opinions which prevailed. One, the most recent which had lately been obtruded so unpleasantly upon them (cf. xiv. 1, 2), was the superstitious notion of Herod Antipas that He was the martyred Baptist raised from the dead. The general belief outside the circle of His disciples was that He was a reincarnation of one of the ancient prophets—so manifestly was He endued with the ancient prophetic spirit, and so impossible did it seem that in those barren days a new prophet should appear. Some recognised in Him the stern Elijah returned in accordance with the Jewish expectation (cf. iii. 1–12) to herald the Messiah's Advent; while others in view of His exceeding graciousness identified Him with the tender and pitiful Jeremiah, truly "the likest to Christ of all the prophets."

Such were the prevailing opinions. "But ye," says He—"who do ye say that I am?" It was a searching and crucial question. They had indeed at the beginning hailed Him as the Promised Saviour, but little wonder had that early faith been shaken in the interval. For they had held the Jewish idea of the Messiah as a victorious deliverer, the King of Israel; and ever since they had cast in their lot with Him He had been striving to dispel it from their minds. He had constantly presented Himself not as the Son of David, the Son of God, but as the Son of Man (cf. viii. 20); and not only had they heard the sneers of the rulers but they had seen many who on the evidence of His miracles had acknowledged His Messiahship, falling from Him, disillusioned by the continued lowliness of His mortal estate. Their faith too had been severely tried; for had they not been His daily companions and known Him

in the homely relationships and ignoble offices of His frail humanity? That He might discover whether their faith had survived the ordeal He put the question, nor had He to wait for an answer. Instant and unhesitating it sprang from the lips of Simon Peter: "Thou art the Christ," that is, the Messiah. That was all, according to St. Mark (cf. viii. 29); and St. Matthew's "the Son of the Living God" adds nothing thereto, since "the Son of God," that ancient designation of the King of Israel, was synonymous with "the Messiah" (cf. iii. 17).

Truly it was a great confession. It proved that in face of all that seemed to contradict and disprove it Peter's early faith had stood firm. Perplexed by the Master's failure to perform the rôle which his Jewish mind so confidently anticipated, he had nevertheless, by no mere human wisdom but by the Heavenly Father's revelation, perceived in Him a deeper glory, and he was surer than ever that He was indeed the Messiah, the Saviour promised of old. A faith which had thus stood the test was invincible. It would endure the ordeal which was still in store, and emerge purified and ennobled.

Right well had he justified the prophetic grace which in the morning of his discipleship (cf. Jo. i. 42) had conferred upon him, when as yet he was only "Simon bar Jonah," "the son of John" (cf. Jo. xxi. 15–17), a Galilean fisherman, the new name of *Cephas* or in Greek *Peter*, "the Rock." And now the Master unfolds to him the high service which in fulfilment thereof he would achieve in days to come. This passage (vers. 17–19), so hotly debated and alas! so grievously perverted, is the basis whereon mediæval ecclesiasticism built its twin dogmas of the Primacy of St. Peter and Priestly Absolution. All that need be said of the former is that it is a mediæval invention, unknown to the great Fathers of the Church. These followed two lines of interpretation. (1) According to Origen, that brilliant teacher of Alexandria, the rock whereon the Lord would build His Church, was indeed Peter, but not Peter alone. It was Peter and all who should join in his adoring confession. It was not Peter simply but Peter the confessor. It was Peter's faith—"the faith of his confession," says St. Chrysostom, "the unwavering faith of the disciple," says St. Cyril. (2) So for a

while thought St. Augustine, following his teacher St. Ambrose of Milan, but latterly he adopted the interpretation of St. Jerome. Offended by the pretensions of Presbyters and Bishops who already in his day, "not understanding the passage, assumed somewhat of the arrogance of the Pharisees" (cf. Mt. xxiii. 13), St. Jerome conceived that the rock whereon the Lord would build His Church was the Lord Himself. He was "the Rock," and Peter was a rock no otherwise than by reflecting Him, "the Light of the World," His disciples are "the Light of the World" too (cf. Jo. viii. 12; Mt. v. 14).

Surely the former is the true interpretation. The Church, as St. Paul viewed it, is a temple of living stones, and each believer is a stone built into the spiritual fabric. Observe that our Lord does not say here "On this rock"—the rock of His disciples' faith—"will I *found* My Church" but "On this rock will I *build* My Church." He is Himself the foundation, the one and only foundation (cf. 1 Cor. iii. 11), and Peter was the first stone built thereon, forasmuch as he was the first to make that grand confession of adoring faith. The promise was not made to him absolutely or exclusively. It was made to him as the first and meanwhile the only confessor; but it belonged equally to every believer who should thereafter join in his confession and be built with him into the Living Temple upon the One Foundation, as he afterwards expressly recognised (cf. 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5).

Thus it was not in all our Lord's thoughts either to proclaim Peter His vicar on earth or to invest him and his official successors with the necessary and exclusive prerogative of priestly absolution, according to those truly impious canons of the Council of Trent which establish this among other "points of doctrine," that "it is untrue that priests who are in mortal sin have no power to bind or loose: priests alone can give absolution, and the words of Christ concerning binding and loosing, remitting and retaining sin, were not spoken to all the faithful." This last affirmation is simply a reckless falsehood, credible only where Scripture is a sealed book. For what is the fact? A little later, when his comrades had joined in Peter's confession, our Lord reiterated His promise, and He addressed it then not to Peter alone but to them all on the strength

of their confession (cf. Mt. xviii. 18). This indeed subverts the dogma of the Primacy of Peter, but does it not leave that of Priestly Absolution untouched, since thus far our Lord merely enlarges the tenure of that office by conferring it not on Peter alone but on all the Apostles? So it might seem were there no further evidence; but our Lord repeated the promise yet a third time. It was the evening of the Resurrection Day, and the disciples were assembled at Jerusalem with the doors fast for fear of the Jews (cf. Jo. xx. 19–23). So far as St. John's narrative goes, it might be supposed that "the disciples" are here the Eleven Apostles; but turning to the parallel narrative of St. Luke (cf. xxiv. 33–49), we find that the company included not merely the Eleven but "them that were with them," both men and women (cf. ver. 10). It is to this promiscuous assemblage of believers that He now reiterates His promise: "Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent Me" or rather "hath commissioned Me" (literally "made Me His Apostle"), "even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Everyone whom the Lord sends is His Apostle; and He sends every true believer, everyone on whom He has breathed His Spirit. His words concerning binding and loosing, remitting and retaining sin, were indeed "spoken to all the faithful," and not merely to a priestly caste conceived as standing in the line of "Apostolic Succession" and thence deriving, by episcopal ordination, the prerogative of absolution. The Church, His mystical Body, is a perpetuation of the Incarnation, the visible representation of the Risen Lord so far, and only so far, as she is animated by His Holy Spirit. Her voice is His voice articulate, and every true believer bears his part, testifying by his personal experience to the Lord's redeeming grace. To pronounce absolution is to attest His mercy to humble penitents; and the office belongs to such as have themselves experienced that mercy and know the gladness of it—to such, to all such, whether lay or cleric, and to no others.

2. *FIRST INTIMATION OF THE PASSION*

xvi. 21–28

21 *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*

22 *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, *Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*

23 *But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

24 *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

25 *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

26 *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

27 *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*

28 *Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

IT was Peter who thus confessed the Lord's Messiahship, but he did not speak for himself alone, and the others presently signified their consent. The Lord welcomed their confession, yet He knew how they still clung to the Jewish idea of the Messiah and His Kingdom and how sorely they needed instruction in the spiritual reality. To this task He would now address

* Gr. *Pity thyself.*

Himself ; but first, aware how slow they would be in taking in the truth, He admonished them that, when they returned home, they should refrain from proclaiming that He was the Messiah. He knew by painful experience what embarrassment would accrue from the multitude's acclamation of Him as the national deliverer and His figuring in the eyes of the Roman authorities as a ring-leader of sedition. It would be time for the Twelve to proclaim their faith in His Messiahship when they had learned what His Messiahship truly meant ; and this lesson He now proceeds to inculcate. In distinct and explicit terms He intimates what it was that awaited Him in the sacred capital—not a throne and a crown but suffering and death and, He adds, seeking to carry their hearts forward to the ultimate triumph, resurrection on the third day.

His rising again the third day would then be unintelligible to them, and they heard only His announcement of suffering and death. It amazed and horrified them. If it were true, it was, as they conceived, the destruction of all their hopes ; and they refused to believe it. Peter was standing behind Him, and in his impetuous fashion he " took Him " or rather " took hold of Him," clutching His shoulder, and remonstrated with Him, nay, " rebuked Him " as though He had uttered a wild impiety. " Be it far from Thee," rather " Mercy on Thee, Lord," he cried, using an impassioned colloquialism : " this shall never be unto Thee." Rash and foolish as it may have been, it was the remonstrance of a loving heart ; and this gave it its sting. The prospect of His Passion was grim and terrible in our Lord's eyes, and ever more and more as it drew nearer His frail humanity shuddered at it and He was tempted to turn aside and seek an easier path. He would have turned aside had He not been persuaded that it was His Father's will that He should suffer and die, a sacrifice for the sin of the world, according to the Scriptures. This held Him stedfast, yet there was a continual conflict in His soul betwixt the call of God and the solicitation of carnal policy ; and now He hears the latter appeal uttered in the moving accents of human affection. It was a subtle device of the Tempter, and " He turned," " He wheeled round," and faced Peter. " Get thee behind Me, Satan ! " He

cried. "Thou art a stumbling-block unto Me: for," He adds, employing a phrase, properly a political phrase, which is ill rendered in our Versions, "thou art not siding with God but with men—not espousing God's cause but men's." In his misguided affection Peter was reinforcing the solicitation of the Master's human weakness and making it harder for Him to do His Father's will.

Then, reaffirming His announcement, He told them that not only was suffering His portion but they must share it, saying "No" to Self, taking up their crosses, and following Him on the Sorrowful Way. They too were called not to earthly glory but to the higher glory of a stern and heroic conflict. And if they shrank from it, let them consider the issues at stake. "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and" not "lose his own soul" but "forfeit his life" or, as the phrase is rendered where it occurs in the Greek Version of the Old Testament (cf. Dt. xxii. 19), "be amerced in his life"—surely a fool's bargain, like the recreant's on the battle-field, who prefers dishonoured life to deathless honour.

It was a dark prospect for men who had been cherishing an expectation so diverse; and lest their hearts should fail, He adds a cheering reassurance. Hard though the ordeal would be, the issue was certain, and some of them would live to see it. They would never see the ancient kingdom of David re-established in Jerusalem, since that was a fond dream; but some of them would witness a nobler triumph—"the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" or, as St. Mark has it (ix. 1), "the Kingdom of God come with power," not indeed the final consummation but the inauguration of the Gospel's victorious career. And wonderfully was the promise fulfilled. Ere that generation passed the Gospel had travelled all over the known world, and far beyond the narrow bounds of Palestine, in Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome, it had free course and was glorified (cf. Rom. xv. 19).

3. *THE TRANSFIGURATION*

xvii. 1–13

1 *And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,*

2 *And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

3 *And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*

4 *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

5 *While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

6 *And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.*

7 *And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.*

8 *And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.*

9 *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*

10 *And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?*

11 *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.*

12 *But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.*

13 *Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.*

THUS did our Lord admonish the Twelve of His approaching Passion and, enlarging on the prophetic significance of His sacramental miracles of feeding the multitudes, seek to open their minds to its redemptive efficacy. And now He turns to the kindred mystery of His Resurrection, foreshadowed by His miracle of walking on the water. Not content with discourse He vouchsafed a revelation to the three who could best profit thereby, taking them apart to "a high mountain," surely not, as ecclesiastical tradition has it, distant Mount Tabor but an adjacent height of Mount Hermon.

What was it that there occurred? It were indeed impiety to intrude rashly into a mystery so sacred, yet this much is indubitable—that it was a foretaste of His Resurrection-glory. His humanity was invested with the conditions which it permanently attained when He was raised from the dead and passed into that Kingdom which flesh and blood cannot inherit; and His appearance to the eyes of the three was like His manifestations during the forty days betwixt His Resurrection and His Ascension. Their spiritual vision was unveiled, and they beheld not only their glorified Lord but two heavenly visitants, Moses and Elijah, representing the preparatory and now fulfilled dispensations of the Law and the Prophets, who had come to hold converse with Him on His approaching Passion.

The purpose of this transcendent experience was twofold. (1) It was designed to strengthen our Lord for the bitter ordeal. His need was extreme; for He was confronted not only by the malice of His enemies but by the dullness of His disciples. And therefore there was vouchsafed to Him a glimpse of the triumph which lay beyond the Cross and its shame, and also a discovery of Heaven's fellowship with Him in the sore ordeal. On earth He was hated and misunderstood, but He had the sympathy of His Father and "the spirits of just men made perfect."

(2) It was a revelation to the disciples. His crucifixion, as it seemed to His enemies the final defeat of His cause, seemed to them the blasting of their fond hopes; but in truth it was a magnificent triumph, the fulfilment, beyond their present comprehension, of the best that they ever dreamed or imagined (see exposition of Lk. ix. 31).

As they took their way down the mountain-slope to rejoin their comrades, the Lord would have discoursed to the three of the vision and initiated them into the mystery of His Resurrection. It was a high privilege that had been accorded to them, and He had chosen them for it because they had proved themselves the most understanding of the Twelve and He hoped that they would be able in some measure to apprehend a revelation which would have been lost upon the others. He began by charging them to keep it secret until He was raised from the dead. Then would be the time to divulge it when the wonder came to pass and needed the attestation of the premonition which He had now vouchsafed. Here again, however, He found Himself confronted with the impenetrable barrier of their spiritual incapacity. They caught the phrase "raised from the dead," and it puzzled them (cf. Mk. ix. 10). Nor indeed did He expect otherwise, but He did expect that they would question Him about it; and He intended by His injunction of secrecy to quicken their sense of the trust which He had reposed in them and incite them to inquiry. But to His disappointment they merely looked at each other in bewilderment and held their peace. They let the opportunity pass, and presently instead of the question which He would fain have heard from their lips they asked Him another—a trivial question arising out of their Jewish presuppositions. Elijah had appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they recalled the Rabbinical notion that on the eve of the Messiah's advent the ancient prophet would reappear and "restore all things," preparing the nation to receive her Deliverer (cf. exposition of iii. 1–12). Their difficulty was that he had appeared so late. Should he not have come before their Master and heralded His advent? It grieved Him that they should be exercised with so trivial a question in that high hour of revelation, yet He

answered them very patiently. There was truth, He told them, in that Jewish expectation, inasmuch as an Elijah is always raised up of God to herald a new era ; and, He added, bringing back their thoughts to the momentous question of His Passion, Elijah had in this instance duly appeared in the person of John the Baptist, and the rulers had wrought their wicked will upon him, and as they had done to him, so would they do to the Son of Man.

4. *HEALING OF AN EPILEPTIC BOY*

xvii. 14–21

14 *And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,*

15 *Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.*

16 *And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.*

17 *Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.*

18 *And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.*

19 *Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?*

20 *And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

21 *Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*

ALWAYS concerned especially with our Lord's teaching, St. Matthew has here, as in other instances, abridged the narrative; and we shall postpone our study of this moving incident until we reach St. Mark's full report (ix. 14–29), merely observing, meanwhile, the progress of events. It is written here that after descending from the Mount of Transfiguration with the three our Lord "came to the multitude." What may this mean? He had left the nine alone in the retreat which He had found in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and how comes it that He now finds a multitude there—"a great multitude," as the other Evangelists remark (cf. Mk. ix. 14;

Lk. ix. 37 R.V.)? St. Mark furnishes the explanation. Not only were the nine surrounded by a great multitude but there were "Scribes questioning with them"—evidently those Scribes from Jerusalem who had so long been keeping a jealous watch upon Him. They had lost sight of Him on His retreat to Phœnicia, and on His reappearance at Magadan they had hastened thither with their Sadducean allies. On His eluding them and betaking Himself northward to Cæsarea Philippi they had tracked Him thither also; and a crowd had followed in their train from Capernaum—the same folk who had pursued Him round the head of the Lake to Bethsaida Julias and had conceived the design of acclaiming Him "King of Israel." Their arrival at Cæsarea Philippi would excite wonderment and would attract a throng of curious spectators. In the assemblage, whether from Capernaum or from the immediate neighbourhood, was a father with an epileptic (cf. ver. 15 R.V.) child, deaf and dumb (cf. Mk. ix. 25). He had brought his pitiful charge to the Lord for healing, and finding Him absent he had appealed to the nine. They should have been able to heal the child; for the Lord had so empowered them in their apostolic commission (cf. Mt. x. 1). Yet they had failed. And wherefore? Not by reason of any peculiar difficulty in the case, since our Lord's seeming apology for them on this score (ver. 21; cf. R.V.) is here a blundering interpolation from St. Mark's narrative (cf. ix. 29). The reason, as He roundly tells them, was their "unbelief," their "little faith." It appears that, not unnaturally aggrieved by the preference which He had shown Peter, James, and John in withdrawing with them to the mount, they had been debating that ungracious question which was so often on their lips in these later days—which of them was the greatest (cf. Mk. ix. 34), oblivious of His solemn forewarnings of the tragic issue. What wonder that thus employed they could work no miracle?

5. *SECOND INTIMATION OF THE PASSION*

xvii. 22, 23

22 *And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men :*

23 *And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again, And they were exceeding sorry.*

ACCORDING to our text, "while they abode in Galilee," after the miracle our Lord and His disciples remained a while at Cæsarea Philippi, and it was there that He made this fresh announcement of His Passion ; but here we are confronted by a twofold difficulty. (1) Cæsarea Philippi was not in Galilee but in Ituræa some twelve miles north-eastward of the Galilean frontier in the Tetrarchy of Philip ; and (2) according to St. Mark (cf. ix. 30) He made the announcement when they had "departed thence and were travelling through Galilee." Not only does the difficulty disappear but the situation is strikingly elucidated when it is observed that the true reading is "while they were gathering themselves together" (cf. R.V. marg.) or rather, since it is a military term, "while they were mustering in Galilee." See what this means. Now that His retreat had been so rudely invaded, it was useless for our Lord to remain at Cæsarea Philippi ; yet it was difficult for Him to escape alike from the malignant Scribes and from the importunate multitude. He had escaped at Magadan by embarking and sailing away over the Lake, but now He must travel by land ; and had they seen Him setting forth with His company, they would have pursued Him. Accordingly He appointed a rendezvous across the Galilean frontier, and He and the Twelve stole away thither one by one probably under cover of night. Mustering there they journeyed together through Galilee toward Capernaum ; and it was as they journeyed that He repeated the intimation which He had

already made (cf. xvi. 21) of His approaching Passion, seeking thus to drive home the truth which they were so slow to receive.

It was not a mere repetition ; for He added the miserable detail of His betrayal. Already He had perceived what was in the heart of Judas Iscariot (cf. Jo. vi. 70, 71), and the announcement was designed as a warning to him in the hope of moving him to timely repentance. As yet, however, it had never entered the minds of the Twelve that there was a traitor in their midst (cf. Mt. xxvi. 21, 22). They would think of treason from without. Even so they were horrified. The announcement only increased their bewilderment, obsessed as they were by their expectation of an earthly triumph ; and, say the other Evangelists (cf. Mk. ix. 32 ; Lk. ix. 45), not merely did they not " understand the saying " but they " were afraid to ask Him—to question Him about it." What sealed their lips ? It was that pitiful reluctance of the human heart to face facts and know the worst so pathetically exemplified by Dean Swift's behaviour when he received a letter from Pope announcing the death of his dear friend the poet Gay. It reached him on December 15, but he did not open it till the 20th, " by an impulse foreboding some misfortune." Our Lord's reiterated admonition of His Passion was penetrating the minds of His disciples ; but " where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," and they would rather continue hugging their delusion.

BACK IN CAPERNAUM (xvii. 24–xviii)

1. *THE TEMPLE-TAX*

xvii. 24–27

24 *And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received* **tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?*

25 *He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?*

26 *Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.*

27 *Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find* †*a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.*

THEY would travel to Capernaum by "the Way of the Sea," the great trade-route from Damascus (cf. iv. 12–16), and as they entered the town, they passed the custom-house. Here an incident occurred which naturally enough, since it would appeal to an Apostle who had once been a tax-gatherer, is recorded by St. Matthew alone. It is one of those light touches which are wont to relieve a tragic situation, and the story is told with a fine appreciation of its humour. Our Lord and the Twelve had been long away from Capernaum, and their payment of the half-shekel exacted annually from every adult Jew for the maintenance of the Temple (cf. Ex. xxx. 13) was still outstanding. As they passed the custom-house, the collectors espied them, and it is an evidence of the reverence

* Called in the original, *didrachma*, being in value fifteen pence.

† Or, *a stater*. It is half an ounce of silver, in value 2*s*. 6*d*. after 5*s*. the ounce.

wherewith our Lord was generally regarded that they did not challenge Himself but beckoned Peter aside and courteously asked him: "Doth not your Master pay the half-shekel?" Peter was stricken with consternation. The tax fell due on the 15th of the month Adar (March) and must be paid by the 25th on penalty of distraint. If he could, he would have made payment forthwith, but their long travel had exhausted the resources of the common purse (cf. Jo. xii. 6). He hastened home in perturbation. The Master had arrived before Him. He had observed the rencontre with the collectors and had guessed what was ado; and when Peter broke in upon Him, He surveyed him with kindly amusement and "took the first word with him." "Simon," said He, giving him his old name as though he were still a fisherman, "of whom is it that the kings of the earth take tribute? Of their own sons or of other people's?" "Of other people's" answered Peter. "Then are their sons exempt." It was a playful rebuke, reminding Peter whose disciple he was. It was much like that other scene a little earlier when the disciples on finding that they had embarked without bread were so discomposed, forgetting that they had with them One who had fed the multitudes (cf. xvi. 7–11). He was "the Son of God," and the Temple was His Father's House (cf. Jo. ii. 16). He was not a tributary there but the Lord of all, and if He would, He might claim exemption for Himself and His followers. But He would not. It was never thus that He asserted His divine prerogative. He had not come to destroy the Law but to fulfil it, and now as ever He would honour its requirements.

But wherewithal? There was an obvious resource which should have occurred to Peter, and the Lord points it out to him in that humorous fashion which, as we have so often remarked, He practised in private intercourse. In the story-loving ancient world there was a wealth of anecdotes about the finding of treasures in fishes' maws. The Greeks had, for example, their tale of Polycrates the tyrant of Samos, who in a fit of unworldliness cast his most precious jewel into the sea and a few days after found it in a fish; and the Jews had theirs of King Solomon and his lost signet-ring and others

like it in humble life. And have we not our own story of St. Mungo and the salmon with the lost ring in its mouth? Such stories were the stock-in-trade of Jewish moralists; and Peter would have been dull indeed had he missed the point when the Master said to him with a merry twinkle in His eyes: "Away, Simon, to the sea and cast a hook; and the first fish that rises, up with it, and on opening its mouth thou shalt find a shekel. Take that and give it them for Me and thee." Peter's old boat was lying in the harbour, and why should not he and his brother Andrew put out that night to the fishing?

2. *TEACHING THE TWELVE* (xviii)

(1) The Greatest in the Kingdom

xviii. 1–14

1 *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

2 *And Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in the midst of them,*

3 *And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

4 *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

5 *And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.*

6 *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

7 *Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*

8 *Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.*

9 *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.*

10 *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

11 *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

12 *How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?*

13 *And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.*

14 *Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*

NIGHT was the time for fishing, and that evening ere the fisher disciples put out with their nets all the Twelve assembled in Peter's house where our Lord had His lodging, and there He resumed the business of their instruction. The first lesson which engaged Him was painfully suggested to Him. St. Matthew, after his wont abbreviating the narrative in order to make room for his fuller report of our Lord's teaching, says merely that they put the question to Him "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" but the other Evangelists explain how the question arose (cf. Mk. ix. 33, 34; Lk. ix. 46, 47). That morning when they heard from His lips the announcement of His betrayal and death, they had been sorely bewildered. They "understood not the saying" and would not question Him about it; but as they journeyed, they discussed it with one another and, clinging blindly to their idea of an earthly triumph, they fell to debating their several merits and their rival titles to reward and honour when the Kingdom was established and their Master seated on the throne of His father David (cf. Mt. xx. 21; Mk. x. 37). He had marked their whispered colloquy and jealous looks, and now He asks them what their dispute had been. They hung their heads, but their silence was a confession and He forthwith read them a lesson—an object-lesson—in true greatness. There was a child, no doubt Peter's, in the room; and He called the little thing to His side (cf. Lk. ix. 47) where He sat in their midst. "Except," said He, "ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

What may this mean? Were they not, apart from the

traitor, already "converted"? Surely they were according to the common use of the term nowadays; but consider how it is used in Holy Scripture. "Convert" means simply "turn," and this is the proper meaning of the Greek verb, as our Revisers, following Wycliffe, render it here. Occasionally it is active (cf. Mt. v. 39), but the point to be observed is that even where it is passive in form, it is never passive in meaning. For example, in the story of the woman with the issue of blood, where we read that, when our Lord felt the clutch of her nervous hand, He "turned Him about in the press" (cf. Mt. ix. 22; Mk. v. 30), it is passive in form, yet it signifies not "He was turned" but "He turned," "wheeled about" like a soldier at the word of command. And so here the proper rendering is not "except ye be converted" or "turned" but "except ye turn."

The difference may seem trivial and insistence upon it mere pedantry, but the language of Holy Writ is always studiously precise, and the importance of this grammatical distinction is revealed by that prophetic scripture (Is. vi. 10) which our Lord and His Apostles so emphasise (cf. Mt. xiii. 15; Mk. iv. 12; Jo. xii. 40; Ac. xxviii. 27): "lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should" not "be converted" but "turn again, and I should heal them." Here that momentous experience commonly denominated "conversion" is defined as a progress of five successive stages: seeing, hearing, understanding, turning, and being healed. For the first four the responsibility lies with the sinner. It is indeed true that sight, hearing, and understanding are the Holy Spirit's gifts, but they are withheld from none who are within the Gospel's range. All have seen Christ "evidently set forth before their eyes," and all have heard and understood His appeal; and if any be blind, it is because he has deliberately closed his eyes and been stricken with judicial blindness. And thus, if a sinner be unsaved, the reason is not that the Holy Spirit has neglected him but that he has refused to respond to the pleading of God's blessed Advocate. The Spirit has wrought His gracious office of presenting the Saviour, opening the sinner's eyes, penetrating

his ears, and stirring his heart ; but the sinner has failed to do his part : he has not looked, he has not hearkened, he has not responded, he has not *turned to God* in penitence and faith and surrendered himself to Love's importunities. This is the sinner's part, and the moment he performs it God does His part—He " heals." And thus appears the error of our current phraseology. The common question " Are you converted ? " is unscriptural ; and it is mischievous inasmuch as it ignores the sinner's personal responsibility and encourages the notion that he must await God's intervention. The scriptural question is " Have you ' converted ' (cf. Is. vi. 10) ? Have you turned (cf. Ezk. xxxiii. 11) ? "

It is indeed true that " conversion " is a final surrender, yet most true also is that saying of the Puritan divine that " the perseverance of the saints is made up of ever new beginnings." To the very last we have need to be continually turning afresh to the Saviour, confessing our failures, and making a new beginning in faith and devotion. Hence our Lord's admonition to His faithful disciples : " except ye turn, and become as little children." Where as in a child's heart dwell the heavenly graces of faith, hope, and love ? Alas that in a striving world they so soon yield place to jealousy, bitterness, and enmity—those cruel passions which had invaded the breasts of the ambitious disciples !

O Lord, gin I lose my childlike trust,
Grant I may be forgiven ;
An' mak' me doon to a bairn again :
For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Never content with mere rebuke, our Lord proceeds to set before His disciples an inspiring incentive. Was not the presence of that sweet child in their midst a hallowing restraint ? Would they not have felt it sacrilege to indulge their selfish passions before him and fill his ears with their hot disputation ? " The greatest reverence," wrote the heathen satirist, " is due to a child. If you meditate aught that is base, despise not your child's years, but let your infant son stay you on the verge of sinning." And even so our Lord here charges us to reverence

" these little ones "—not children alone but all feeble souls, and never " offend," never " put stumbling-blocks " (cf. v. 29) in their way.

> Set not thy foot to make the blind to fall,
> Nor wilfully offend thy weaker brother:
> Nor wound the dead with thy tongue's bitter gall;
> Neither rejoice thou in the fall of other.

It is the foulest of crimes, and ere committing it, says our Lord in proverbial phrase, it were better for a man to die a dog's death by drowning with a stone about his neck; better, He adds, repeating language which He had already used (cf. Mt. v. 29, 30), to suffer the sorest mutilation, the loss of a hand, a foot, or an eye, than thus ruin his immortal soul.

In truth it is more than a crime: it is sacrilege. It was an ancient thought that every earthly thing is a copy of the heavenly; and it was expressed by Plato in his doctrine of Eternal Ideas, " the fundamental essences of things, in virtue of which they are what they are," and by the later Jews in their beautiful fancy of a guardian angel attending every man in his progress through the world. His angel is the man as God sees him, as God means him to be; and to lead a little one astray is a desecration of the Divine Ideal. " See that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you that "—however lightly they may be esteemed on earth—" in Heaven their angels do alway behold the face of My Father. It is not the will of your Father " literally " a thing willed in the presence of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Observe that in illustration of the Father's care for the "little ones " St. Matthew introduces here (vers. 12, 13) the parable of the Lost Sheep which, according to St. Luke (xv. 3–7), our Lord spoke not to the Twelve but, on a quite different occasion, to the Pharisees when they censured His friendship for sinners. That incident is unrecorded by St. Matthew, but the parable was too precious to be omitted and he finds a place for it here. It is somewhat abruptly inserted, and to fit it into the context many later manuscripts have interpolated a gracious sentence (ver. 11; cf. R.V.) from St. Luke's Gospel (xix. 10).

(2) Rules of Christian Fellowship

xviii. 15–20

15 *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

16 *But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

17 *And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

18 *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

19 *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

20 *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

THEIR dispute about their rival merits had stirred angry jealousies in the hearts of the Twelve, and the Lord now proceeds to show how His disciples in all time to come should deal with mutual grievances. He lays down a rule, and it is significant that it is not a new rule but a familiar Rabbinical maxim. By His reaffirmation thereof He administered to them a gentle reproof, as it were telling them that their quarrel was inexcusable, since they should have known better. The Rabbinical rule ran thus: "If thy neighbour do thee a wrong, tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained him. But if he will not hear thee, speak to him in the presence of one or two

(cf. Dt. xix. 15), that they may hear it. And if even so he will not hear, let him be worthless in thine eyes."

The sole difference betwixt this and our Lord's rule is that He introduces as the final arbiter "the Church," the *ecclesia* (*église*), that fellowship of His believing people in all ages whereof He had already spoken at Cæsarea Philippi (cf. xvi. 18) —the only other instance on record where He employs this term afterwards so familiar. It was originally a term of Greek polity, denoting especially the popular assembly at Athens, the body of representatives "called forth," as the word signifies, from the mass of the citizens to deliberate and determine in their name on questions of common concern. It is one of two Greek terms employed in the Septuagint Version for the Hebrew phrase "the Congregation of Israel," the other being "Synagogue"; and thus when the Scribes organised their effective system of religious education, they found a name ready to hand in the common parlance for the "houses of instruction" which they instituted in every Jewish community not only in the Holy Land but in every country where Jews had settled. These they designated "synagogues." By and by when our Lord required a designation for the community of His disciples, He adopted the synonymous term *ecclesia*. It served His purpose well, at once proclaiming the relationship of Christianity to the ancient order and distinguishing it from contemporary Judaism. Indeed the Scribes were ill advised in preferring the term *synagogue*, "congregation" or "assembly," to the sacred name *ecclesia*, signifying as it does a community "chosen" and "called" of God—the characteristics of the true Israel (cf. Rom. xi. 7; Phil. iii. 14).

The Church as the community of believers devoted to Christ and guided by His Spirit is the final court of appeal. He is her Head and she His mystic Body; and even as the body moves and acts by the impulse of the brain, so the Church, in so far as she maintains vital union with her Living Lord, speaks in His name and by His authority. Her thoughts are His thoughts, her decisions His decisions, her acts His acts. As He had already declared at Cæsarea Philippi (cf. xvi. 19), so far and only so far as they abode in His fellowship, would whatsoever

His disciples bound on earth be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever they loosed on earth be loosed in Heaven.

And now He brings the truth home to the Twelve and shows them the mischief of the selfish ambition which they were cherishing and which had set them at variance. It is only as we remain in vital union with Him that our wills are one with His, and the moment we set our hearts on selfish ends we lose touch with Him. And what is the remedy? It is that we should continually realise the brotherhood of believers and make the common good our concern. A selfish prayer will never be answered, but "if two agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them," says our Lord, "of My Father which is in Heaven." Selfishness is eliminated by fellowship; it has no place in the Communion of Saints. Cherish no desire which you would blush to acknowledge, seek only what you can confess to your brother, only what he can join you in seeking; and God will grant you the desire of your heart and fulfil your counsel.

But is it only in their fellowship with one another that the Lord is thus present with His people? Among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri is a collection of "Sayings of Jesus," whereof one runs thus: "Wheresoever they may be, they are not without God; and where there is one alone, even thus I am with him. Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood, and there I am." It is a gracious promise to the solitary, to lonely toilers—the woodman in the forest, the hewer in the quarry.

> Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,
> And every spot is hallowed ground.

(3) A Lesson in Forgiveness

xviii. 21–35

21 *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*

22 *Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

23 *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.*

24 *And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand *talents.*

25 *But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.*

26 *The servant therefore fell down, and †worshipped him saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*

27 *Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*

28 *But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred ‡pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.*

29 *And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*

30 *And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.*

31 *So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.*

32 *Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:*

* A talent is 750 ounces of silver, which after five shillings the ounce is 187*l.* 10*s.*

† Or, *besought him.*

‡ The Roman penny is the eighth part of an ounce, which after five shillings the ounce is seven pence halfpenny.

33 *Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?*

34 *And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.*

35 *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

THUS our Lord would have His disciples deal with one who did them wrong, gently and patiently trying every device to win him and bring him to a better mind. It is indeed a hard requirement—so naturally resentful is the human heart; and they felt that surely there was a limit to forbearance. "Lord," said Peter, "how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" The Rabbinical rule was that after three offences the duty of forgiveness ceased; but aware that the Master would require a larger generosity, Peter suggested "seven times" as the limit. And what is the Master's answer? He lays down two principles.

1. The Christian duty of forgiveness is commensurate with the natural resentment of the human heart. We miss His meaning here unless we read His words aright, according to the marginal rendering of the Revised Version: "I say not unto thee 'until seven times' but 'until seventy times and seven.'" It is an unusual phrase in the original, and plainly our Lord is referring here to a passage where it occurs in the Book of Genesis (cf. iv. 24). The story is that Lamech, a descendant of Cain five generations removed, had a son called Tubal-cain, the first smith and the first artificer of deadly weapons. When he saw his clever son's invention, the old savage was delighted. Hitherto he had encountered his enemies with nothing but his fists or a club, and his revenge had been hardly won and had often cost him wounds. But now with a sharp weapon in his hands how sure and easy it would be! What an advantage he had over his ancestor Cain, the first murderer! "If," he cried, "Cain was avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech shall be avenged seventy and sevenfold." Vengeance "until seventy times and seven" was his desire; and here, our Lord tells Peter, is the measure of

Christian forgiveness : our readiness to forgive must be as large as the unregenerate heart's lust for vengeance.

2. Not content herewith He lays down a second and nobler law : the measure of the forgiveness which we must show to our fellow men is the forgiveness which God has shown us. And this He illustrates by a parable. It was the fashion of Oriental potentates to leave the management of their affairs in the hands of their ministers (cf. Gen. xxxix. 4) ; and our Lord tells of a king who, having occasion to hold an investigation into the state of his finances, found that the officer in charge thereof had made away with ten thousand talents, over £2,000,000—an extravagant and indeed impossible defalcation but on this very account the more fitly representing the incalculable and undischargeable debt which sinners owe to God. After the manner of a despot he ordered not only that the offender's property be confiscated but that he and his wife and children be auctioned in the slave-market. The wretch entreated forbearance, promising—what he could never perform—to pay all if only he were granted a respite ; and the king relented and absolutely cancelled the enormous obligation. How better could one so mercifully treated have proved his gratitude than by showing mercy after his own small measure ? But hardly had he quitted the royal presence than he encountered a neighbour who owed him a hundred "pence" (*denarii*)—a paltry £3 10*s*. ; and he took him by the throat and demanded instant payment. In the very language which a little ago he had himself employed, the man craved a respite, promising—what he might easily have done—to pay him all. But he was inexorable and cast him into the debtors' prison. It was indeed an incredible villainy, but here again our Lord intentionally so puts the case, demonstrating by the example of an inconceivable inhumanity what an enormity it is that a sinner who owes so much to the mercy of God, should be unmerciful to a fellow sinner. The king heard the story, and indignantly revoking his clemency he sentenced the villain to be scourged and set in the stocks (cf. Ecclus. xxxiii. 26 ; Ac. xvi. 22–24 ; 2 Chr. xvi. 10 R.V. marg. ; Jer. xx. 3, xxix. 26), until, added he with biting sarcasm, he should implement his glib promise to "pay all that was due."

OUR LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY

III. HIS JUDÆAN MINISTRY

xix–xxviii

III
HIS JUDÆAN MINISTRY
xix–xxviii

AT BETHABARA BEYOND JORDAN

xix. 1, 2

1 *And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan;*

2 *And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.*

HERE the narrative, hastening toward that momentous consummation, the Passion of our Lord, makes a long leap forward. See what happened during the interval covered by these two verses. If there be truth in the tradition which celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration on August 6, it would be toward the close of that month when He bade farewell to Capernaum. He did not, however, proceed immediately to Jerusalem, but, as St. Luke's narrative shows, lingered a while in Galilee, revisiting the scenes of His ministry; and it was near the Feast of Tabernacles, which began that year (28 A.D.) on September 23, that He quitted Galilee and went up to the Holy City (cf. Jo. vii. 2–10). There He exercised that eventful ministry which St. John records (vii. 14–x. 39). It lasted until the Feast of Dedication (cf. Jo. x. 22) at the close of December, when, driven from the city by the violence of the rulers, He betook Himself to Bethabara beyond Jordan, a spot ever memorable and sacred to Him as the original scene of the Baptist's preaching and the scene also of His own call to His Messianic ministry (Jo. x. 40–42; cf. i. 28). It is this movement that St. Matthew indicates when he says that "He

came into the coasts" or "borders of Judæa beyond Jordan," and he not merely like St. John tells how gracious was the ministry which He exercised there among the multitudes that resorted thither, but records several precious passages thereof (cf. xix. 3–xx. 16).

QUESTION OF DIVORCE

xix. 3–12

3 *The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*

4 *And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*

5 *And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*

6 *Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

7 *They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and put her away?*

8 *He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

9 *And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*

10 *His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.*

11 *But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.*

12 *For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

HIS ministry at Bethabara engaged the jealous attention of the authorities at Jerusalem, and as they had done in the case of the Baptist they despatched deputies to interview Him and elicit from Him, if they might, some heretical pronouncement. The deputies were Pharisees. "There came unto Him" not "the Pharisees" but, according to the true reading, simply "Pharisees"—Rabbis versed in the Sacred Law; and they requested His judgment on that thorny question wherewith He had already dealt in the course of His Galilean ministry (cf. v. 31, 32)—the legitimacy of divorce. We have seen how cruelly the Rabbinical law bore upon womankind, permitting a man "to put away his wife for every cause—for any reason," however frivolous. Aware doubtless of His pronouncement in Galilee that the only valid reason for divorce was unfaithfulness, those Pharisees would have Him repeat it now, thus not merely contravening the law of the land but incurring the popular displeasure. For it is remarkable how highly the facility of divorce was prized by the Jews in those days. It was claimed by several of the Rabbis as a singular privilege divinely accorded to Israel and denied to other nations.

Skilfully avoiding the snare which they had laid, He turned their trick to their own confusion. With that cutting sarcasm so frequent on His lips in combating the Rabbis, those learned interpreters of the Scriptures, "Have ye not read?" He referred them to the primal institution of marriage: "The Creator originally 'made them male and female,' and cleaving to one another 'the twain become one flesh'" (cf. Gen. i. 27, ii. 24). According to this, the original ordinance, marriage was an indissoluble union. It was a heavy condemnation of their law of divorce, nor could they challenge it, since it was so written; but loath to own defeat they raised a difficulty: Why then did Moses expressly sanction divorce (Dt. xxiv. 1)? It was indeed a clever turn of dialectic; for apparently He must either abandon His appeal to the primal ordinance or impiously condemn that law of Moses. But he did neither. It is told of Solon the Athenian legislator that once, being asked if the laws which he had ordained were absolutely the

best, he answered that they were the best that the citizens could receive. Precisely this is our Lord's answer here: "Moses in view of your hard-heartedness permitted you to put away your wives; but this is not the original ordinance." Moses' sanction of divorce was necessitated by the failure of the Israelites to rise to the height of the divine ideal. It was no privilege but their condemnation and shame.

How grateful to His contemporaries was the liberty which their marriage-law allowed them is evinced by the reception accorded to His censure thereof. It displeased even the Twelve, and when they got home to their lodging (cf. Mk. x. 10), they petulantly protested that on these terms marriage was an intolerable bondage and it would be better not to marry. Gently yet not without rebuke He answered: "It is not everyone who can receive this saying," meaning their counsel of celibacy. Marriage was ordained "for a remedy against sin," and not to everyone has the grace of continence been vouchsafed. The religious value of celibacy is determined by the motive which prompts it. It has none where it is necessary through physical incapacity whether congenital or tyrannically inflicted; and just as little where the incapacity is voluntary as in the case of misguided enthusiasts like Origen of Alexandria who, shrinking from moral conflict and distrusting the aids of heavenly grace, mutilated themselves for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake (cf. v. 27–30). And what, our Lord here tacitly suggests, would be the religious value of a celibacy prompted by no higher motive than distaste for matrimonial embarrassments?

BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN

xix. 13–15

13 *Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray : and the disciples rebuked them.*

14 *But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me : for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

15 *And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.*

THE worst evil of the Rabbinical law of divorce was its desecration of the home ; and however displeasing our Lord's censure thereof may have been to the generality of His hearers, there were some, especially womenfolk, who gratefully approved it. As He sat thus discussing the question with the Twelve, a company of visitors presented themselves at the door of His lodging, craving an interview—mothers with their little children, "infants," as St. Luke says (xviii. 10), or rather "babes," the same word which in his story of the Nativity (ii. 12, 16) he uses of the Holy Child—"a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And not the mothers alone but, as St. Mark indicates by the grammar of the original (cf. x. 13), the fathers with them. And what was their errand? When the Evangelists say that the babes were "brought unto Him" (cf. Mk. x. 13 ; Lk. xviii. 15), it is a significant word that they employ. It is the word which is used of the Wise Men "presenting" their precious gifts (cf. Mt. ii. 11). It is a sacrificial term, and in this connection it is generally translated "offer" in our Version (cf. Mt. v. 23, 24, viii. 4 ; Heb. v. 1, 3, 7, vii. 27, viii. 3, 4, ix. 7, 9, 14, 25, 28, x. 12). As worshippers brought their gifts to the altar, even so was it that those fathers and mothers brought their babes to the Saviour, that He might bless them, "putting His hands on them and praying."

No wonder that when His disciples would have turned them from the door, the Master was "much displeased" (Mk. x. 14). Had they forgotten the lesson which He had taught them that evening at Capernaum, that "these little ones" were precious in the Father's sight, and none who lacked the spirit of a child could enter the Kingdom of Heaven (xviii. 1–14)? And had they companied with Him so long without perceiving the tenderness which He had for all God's "little ones" and which breathed in His behaviour and speech? It was a pleasant fancy of Lord Macaulay's loved sister Margaret that the secret of his marvellous diction, so lucid and picturesque, was his fondness for children and his habit of conversing with them and entertaining them with stories; and who but a lover of the Father's little ones could have taught the simple folk of Galilee as Jesus did, talking to them of homely and familiar things—their nets, their lamps, their sowing and their reaping, the birds of the air and the flowers of the field—and discovering therein eternal truths beyond the ken of Rabbi or philosopher?

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

xix. 16–22

16 *And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*

17 *And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

18 *He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,*

19 *Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

20 *The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

21 *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

22 *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

ON the departure of those visitors our Lord, says St. Matthew, "departed thence," meaning evidently that He quitted His lodging to walk abroad with the Twelve, since the narrative, according to St. Mark (x. 17 R.V.), proceeds "as He was going forth into the way." He was just at the door when this new visitor appeared.

The Pharisees were not all enemies of our Lord, nor were they all "hypocrites—play-actors." Not a few of them were deeply earnest men, passionately desiring to attain the righteousness which God requires and seeking it in all sincerity by the only way they knew—diligent obedience to the Law and painful observance of its ordinances. These were not merely the Ten

Commandments but the multitudinous rules which the Rabbis had deduced from the Mosaic Law, that interminable code of ceremonial prescriptions and restrictions known as " the Tradition of the Elders " (cf. xv. 3). It was a toilsome way, and the misery of it was that it brought men no nearer to God. It sufficed where there was no deep sense of need, but one who knew " the plague of his own heart " was none the better when he had done all that the Law required. His soul was still unsatisfied, still a stranger to the peace of God ; and his cry was " What lack I yet ? "

An example of this sort of Pharisee—" the tell-me-what-I-must-do-and-I-will-do-it Pharisee " as he was derisively designated—is Saul of Tarsus ; and here is another. Though a young man, he was, says St. Luke (xviii. 18), " a ruler," meaning not merely as the title signified in Galilee (cf. Mt. ix. 18 with Mk. v. 22 and Lk. viii. 41), that he was a Ruler of the Synagogue but, as it signified at Jerusalem (cf. Jo. iii. 1), that he was a member of the high court of the Sanhedrin. A zealous Pharisee, he had been vainly seeking to attain righteousness by " the works of the Law " ; and now in despair, regardless alike of his dignity and of the displeasure of his colleagues, he has come down to Bethabara that he may take counsel with our Lord and perchance learn from Him the way of peace. How eager he was and what reverence he had conceived for the Galilean Prophet appears in the manner of his approach as St. Mark depicts it (cf. x. 17). As he came down the road from Jerusalem he espied our Lord leaving His abode with the Twelve, and fearful of missing the interview he ran toward Him and kneeled before Him and blurted out his question.

Our text is here much confused. According to the best authorities the young ruler's question runs : " Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ? " and the Lord's answer, not " Why callest thou Me good ? " but " Why askest thou Me of what is good ? " This is nothing else than a manipulation of the original text by early copyists who, blunderingly solicitous for our Lord's honour, eliminated what seemed to them a disavowal of goodness on His part, thereby unwittingly enervating His argument ; and happily the

indubitably authentic text has been preserved in the companion narratives of St. Mark (x. 17, 18) and St. Luke (xviii. 18, 19).

"Good Master," cried the young ruler, "what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" It was an unwonted style of address. "Master" or "Teacher" is the Hebrew *Rabbi*; and this title was accounted by the Jews so honourable that it always stood alone, needing no addition. But such was the young ruler's reverence for our Lord that, as though deeming the most honourable of appellations insufficient, he made it more honourable still and styled Him "Good Master." It was a moving appeal, meriting surely a gracious response; yet it was accorded, to all appearance, a cold reception. With seeming captiousness our Lord fastened upon that unwonted epithet. "Why callest thou Me 'good'?" He demanded. "There is none good but One" or rather "One there is that is good." What did He mean? Assuredly it was no repudiation of personal sinlessness, no denial of His deity, since He repeatedly asserted both; neither was it a contemptuous rebuke of fulsome adulation, since there was no insincerity in the young ruler's heart nor flattery on his lips. In truth beneath His seeming ungraciousness there lay a gracious purpose. He would fain elicit the faith which was struggling feebly and dumbly in that bewildered soul. It is as though He had said: "You have given Me a title of adoration. Do you mean it?"

Thus challenging the inquirer to reflection, He proceeded to further searching of his heart. The way to eternal life, said He, was by "keeping the commandments." That was the Pharisaic way which the young ruler had been vainly following; and disappointed though he was that our Lord had no better way to recommend, he bethought himself that perhaps He had in view some other and more efficacious commandments than he had known. "Which commandments?" he asked, or more properly "What manner of commandments?" and the Lord answered by quoting the second table of the Decalogue (cf. Ex. xx. 12–17). Then, and surely with reason, hope died in the young ruler's breast. What were those five commandments but a summary of man's duty to man? and all his days he had been doing that and more. "What lack I yet?" he moaned.

It was more than a cry of despair. It was a revelation of an eager yearning for the peace of God, and it moved our Lord. St. Mark says (x. 21) that "beholding him, He loved him" or rather "He looked upon him (cf. Mk. x. 27, xiv. 67; Lk. xxii. 61) and loved him." It was the fashion of a Jewish Rabbi, when a disciple acquitted himself well, to rise and kiss his brow; and this is the Evangelist's meaning here. Our Lord gave the young ruler the teacher's token of approbation, telling him that he had answered well. And then He took up his question "What lack I yet?" "One thing thou lackest (cf. Mk. x. 21): go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." It is at the first glance an amazing requirement, and it has often been literally construed by earnest men, like that Egyptian monk in the fourth century of whom it is told that his sole possession was a copy of the Gospels and on reading this story he went and sold it and bestowed the price on charity, therein missing our Lord's purpose. He was a wise physician.

> He took the suffering human race,
> He read each wound, each weakness clear;
> And struck His finger on the place,
> And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!*

Every man has his own besetting sin, and therewith he must resolutely grapple and at all costs subdue it. With one, like Nicodemus, it is cowardice, and to him the Lord's command is "Confess Me before men"; with another it is pride, and here the command is "Abase thyself"; with another it is love of the world, and for him the word is "Leave all and follow Me." And, says Richard Baxter, "mark what I say, and may the Lord set it home upon your hearts: That man who has anything in the world so dear to him that he cannot spare it for Christ, if He call for it, is no true Christian." The young ruler had thought that eternal life was his supreme desire, but now by skilful searching of his heart the Lord has shown him that his wealth was still dearer to him. This was the fetter which bound him and which he must break if he would inherit eternal life.

Alas, the sacrifice was too painful for him and he declined

it. "He was sad at that saying," says St. Mark (x. 22), employing in the original a picturesque phrase which this rendering poorly represents. In the only other passage where it occurs in the New Testament (cf. Mt. xvi. 3), it is used of an angry sunrise—a "lowring" sky betokening foul weather. And its meaning here is that when the young ruler heard the Lord's demand, his face clouded over. "His countenance fell at the word, and he went away sorrowful—he went away grieving." Did he ever return? In the third canto of Dante's *Inferno* it is told that amid the caitiff crew, "hateful to God and to His enemies," not good enough for heaven nor bad enough for hell and therefore refused by both, appeared the miserable shade of "him who made through cowardice the great refusal (*il gran rifiuto*)." It has been fancied that this was the young ruler; but surely it cannot be. Surely it is incredible that one who so yearned for eternal life, one whom Jesus loved, should be thus an outcast from His presence. Surely, though he went away grieving, he yet returned and made the great surrender.

THE EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

xix. 23–30

23 *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

24 *And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

25 *When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?*

26 *But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*

27 *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*

28 *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

29 *And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*

30 *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

IF the young ruler went away sorrowful, he left sorrow behind him. Our Lord had been striving to win him, leading him step by step to a full surrender; and it grieved Him when he thus recoiled from the decisive issue. "It is difficult," He exclaimed, "for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!" and when the Twelve looked at Him in mute astonishment, He reaffirmed it with stronger emphasis: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle"—a proverb frequent in the Talmud, where sometimes "an elephant" is

substituted for "a camel." It seems somewhat far-fetched. One suggestion is that it was the impatient exclamation of a camel-driver trying to thread his needle in order to stitch a torn sack or broken harness: "Plague on this thick thread! The camel would go through easier." Another is that "the needle's eye" was the postern-gate for the admission of foot-passengers into a walled town; and this seems to have been in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote:

> It is as hard to come as for a camel
> To thread the postern of a small needle's eye.

Probably the ancient scholiast was right in seeing here an example of that confusion of vowel-sounds which grammarians termed "itacism," so common in speech and writing. The proverb was properly "Easier for a cable (*kamīlos*) to pass through a needle's eye"; and since their pronunciation was hardly distinguishable, *kamīlos*, an unliterary word, was mistaken for *kamēlos*, "a camel."

"Who then can possibly be saved?" murmured the astonished disciples. "With God all things are possible" He answered, telling them thus epigrammatically that the evil lies not in riches but in the love of riches, and that grace can master even this evil passion. Wherefore was it that they were so perturbed by a declaration which, poor as they were in worldly goods, did not touch them? With characteristic frankness Peter betrayed what was in their minds. They in their smaller measure had made the sacrifice which the young ruler had declined, leaving all at the Master's call. "What then," he asked, "shall we have?" It was a pitiful confession. With their Jewish dream of an earthly kingdom they had made the sacrifice in the expectation of a rich recompense when their Master was seated on the throne of His father David and they, His faithful followers, were promoted to the chief offices of honour and emolument in the restored Kingdom of Israel (cf. xx. 21). No wonder they were discomfited by His declaration that "a rich man would hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." It seemed as though their golden dream were thereby whistled down the wind.

The Lord might well have answered sternly, reproving their obstinate adherence to that crude ideal of the Messianic Kingdom which He had so long laboured to expel from their minds, and the mercenary spirit which animated them ; but for very pity He refrained. Time and sharp experience would open their eyes ; and meanwhile He soothes their alarm with an assurance that all their expectation would come to pass, though after a larger and nobler fashion than they dreamed. For He would be no man's debtor, and every sacrifice for His name's sake would surely receive a manifold requital both here and hereafter. " But," He adds significantly, " many first shall be last, and last first " ; and what this means He proceeds to explain by a parable.

THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD

XX. 1–16

1 *For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.*

2 *And when he had agreed with the labourers for a *penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

3 *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,*

4 *And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.*

5 *Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.*

6 *And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?*

7 *They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.*

8 *So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.*

9 *And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.*

10 *But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.*

11 *And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,*

12 *Saying, These last †have wrought but one hour, and thou hast*

* The Roman penny is the eighth part of an ounce, which after five shillings the ounce is seven pence halfpenny.

† Or, *have continued one hour only.*

made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 *But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?*

14 *Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.*

15 *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*

16 *So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

THE lesson of this parable is twofold: (1) that though wealth is evil when a man sets his heart upon it and lets it come between his soul and the Kingdom of Heaven, it is good when wisely and generously employed; and (2) that mercenary service is worthless in God's sight: it is not mere service that counts, but the love which prompts it.

The working day began at six a.m. and lasted till six p.m., and our Lord tells how a thriving vine-dresser went out betimes to the market-place to hire labourers. He engaged a gang at the usual day's wage of "a penny"—a *denarius*, a silver coin corresponding roughly to our shilling, though worth more as values went then. About nine o'clock, needing more labourers, he returned to the market-place and, finding others unemployed, he hired them. With these he made no bargain, promising simply to pay them "whatsoever was right"; and, glad to get work, they agreed. He did the like at noon and again at three o'clock. At five o'clock he found some men still idle—the poorest sort whom no one would hire. Their dejected look awoke his compassion and, late though it was, he bade them go and start work. At six o'clock—the "loosing-time"—the steward summoned the labourers to receive their pay. They were properly entitled simply to what they had earned, but these were hard times and the master desired that they should all receive a full day's wage. Like most benevolent men, he had a turn for humour, and for the enjoyment of the business he had directed that they should be paid in the reverse order of their hiring. Seeing the last hired getting full pay for their

hour's work, the men who had worked the whole day would gleefully reckon what they should get. It would stagger them when the ninth, sixth, and third hour men were all alike dealt with on the same terms ; and when their turn arrived and they too were presented with a *denarius*, they were indignant and one of them insolently protested : " These last fellows have " not " wrought " but " put in but a single hour, and thou hast put them on an equality with us who have borne the day's toil and sweat ! " It seemed a genuine grievance. Not only had the eleventh hour men done very little but, poor, useless creatures as they were, they had merely " put in " their hour. " Friend " or rather " Mate," said the master, " I am doing thee no injustice." There was no grievance. The men who had done the full day's work had got the full day's pay for which they bargained. They would have had a grievance had the master offered them less ; but what was it to them if out of the kindness of his heart he paid the others more than they had earned ? His money was his own, and he had a right to be generous with it. " Take up thy pay, and begone ! It is my will to give unto ' this last fellow ' even as unto thee. Is thine eye evil " or rather " grudging, because I am generous ? " There truly lay the man's offence : he grudged his unfortunate fellows a kindness which was no wrong to him, like the Judaists in St. Paul's day who resented the admission of the Gentiles on equal terms with themselves.

The grand lesson of the parable is the generosity of God's dealings. He does not consider merely our actual achievements, but takes account of our circumstances and makes allowance for our difficulties ; and our service, though ever so poor, is well pleasing to Him if it be the best that we can do and be rendered in love and faithfulness. And thus our Lord corrected the mercenary spirit which animated the Twelve and which had prompted their question " What then shall we have ? " It is the spirit of an hireling working for his wage, and God would have us serve Him for love, " not for the hope of glory or reward."

It was this parable that not only furnished Ruskin with the title of his book *Unto This Last* but inspired the teaching of that noblest of treatises on political economy.

ON THE WAY TO THE PASSOVER (xx. 17–34)

1. *THIRD INTIMATION OF THE PASSION*

xx. 17–19

17 *And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,*

18 *Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,*

19 *And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.*

HERE again the narrative takes a forward leap, and happily St. John has recorded what occurred during the interval (cf. Jo. xi. 1–54). It was at the close of the year 28 A.D. that our Lord retreated with the Twelve from Jerusalem to Bethabara, and He had been busily engaged there for some two months when His friends Martha and Mary summoned Him to their home at Bethany just over the crest of Mount Olivet within two miles of the sacred capital. There He wrought that transcendent miracle, the raising of Lazarus; and so strongly did it reinforce the general belief in His Messiahship that the Sanhedrin, apprehensive of the vengeance which the imperial government would exact should the populace acclaim Him King of Israel, decreed His death. Having work still to do, He retreated to the village of Ephraim close to the northern frontier of Judæa (cf. Jo. xi. 54). And there He was safe, since in case of alarm He could escape into Samaria beyond the Sanhedrin's jurisdiction. He remained at Ephraim with the Twelve until "the Passover was nigh at hand" and it was time for Him to betake Himself to Jerusalem to keep the Feast and fulfil it by His sacrificial death.

That year (29 A.D.) the Holy Week began on April 12, and

it appears from the sequel that it was the morning of the 10th when He set forth. Ephraim was only twenty miles distant from Jerusalem, but the intervening country was a precipitous and impassable wilderness, and the route for travellers wound south-eastward among the mountains for some twelve miles until it joined the highway from the north near the city of Jericho, whence it was a journey of some fifteen miles farther to the Holy City. Our Lord and the Twelve did not leave Ephraim alone, since other worshippers were going up thence to the Feast and they travelled in company. It was with a peculiar expectancy that not only they but all the pilgrims repaired to Jerusalem on this occasion ; for the fame of that amazing miracle had spread over the land (cf. Jo. xi. 55–57) and the Sanhedrin's decree was a premonition of startling developments. The Twelve were persuaded that now at length their long-cherished hope was on the eve of fulfilment and their Master was going up to Jerusalem to claim His throne. He knew what was in their minds, and as they travelled among the mountains toward the Plain of Jericho, He took them apart from the rest of the company and told them plainly on what errand they were bound, reiterating the intimation which twice already (cf. xvi. 21 ; xvii. 22, 23) He had made of His approaching Passion and setting the tragedy before them in all its grim detail. It needed at this stage no supernatural vision to foresee the course of events. He would be arrested, tried, and condemned by the Sanhedrin, but this would not be the end, since at that period of national subjection the Jewish court's sentence must pass under the Roman governor's review, and on approval would be executed after the Roman fashion by crucifixion. All this He explicitly announced, but so confident was the disciples' anticipation of an imminent triumph that they could not take it in, and they interpreted His dark foreboding in the light of His concluding assurance that on the third day He would rise again, fancying, as presently appears, that He meant merely that the final triumph would be preluded by a stern conflict.

2. *SALOME AND HER SONS*

XX. 20–28

20 *Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.*

21 *And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*

22 *But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.*

23 *And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

24 *And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.*

25 *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.*

26 *But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;*

27 *And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:*

28 *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

THE highway from the north was thronged with pilgrims going up to the Feast; and on reaching it our Lord and the Twelve were joined, probably by prearrangement, by a company of their friends from Capernaum, among them Salome, the mother of James and John (cf. exposition of x. 2).

They were all brimming with high expectation of the approaching *dénouement*, and Salome had conceived an ambitious design for the advancement of her sons. It was that they should extort from the Master a pledge that, when He gained His Kingdom, He would assign them the chief places of honour by His throne. It was indeed a dishonourable project; and it was specially directed against Peter who, as sharing with the two brothers our Lord's peculiar confidence, would be regarded by them as their chief rival. It is surely significant that in telling the story St. Mark is silent regarding Salome's intervention (cf. Mk. x. 35–37); and the reason appears when it is remembered that, according to trustworthy tradition, he derived from Peter the material of his Gospel while accompanying the Apostle on his missionary journeys. It was a palliation of Salome's action that it was dictated by a woman's solicitude for her own; but their connivance was inexcusable, and Peter with natural resentment justly ascribed the shame to them. With the same solicitude for their good name which prompted St. Luke to pass over the incident in silence, St. Matthew is careful to mention Salome's intervention as a certain extenuation of their behaviour.

She was a clever woman, and she cleverly conducted the negotiation. "She came to Him with her sons" says the Evangelist; and the phrase is significant. It denotes in the New Testament a reverential approach—a slave's to his master (cf. Mt. xiii. 27), a subject's to his ruler (cf. Mt. xxvii. 58), a suppliant's to the Throne of Grace (cf. Heb. iv. 16). It was thus that Salome came to the Lord, presenting her petition on her sons' behalf. According to St. Mark they adopted the manner of an eastern court, asking Him to promise with large munificence "whatsoever they should desire" (cf. Mt. xiv. 7; Esth. v. 1–8). But He would not so bind Himself. "What wilt thou?" He asked; and she unfolded her ambition. It merited indeed a stern rebuke, yet it stirred no indignation in His breast—only a great compassion. "Ye know not," He cried, "what ye ask!" It was, as appears in the sequel, Friday afternoon; and had they been granted prevision of that very hour a week thence, what would they have beheld?

The Master lifted up not on a throne but on a cross, and on His right hand and on His left—the places which they coveted —two malefactors moaning out their lives (cf. xxvii. 38).

> We, ignorant of ourselves,
> Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers
> Deny us for our good; so find we profit
> By losing of our prayers.

The dread reality was hidden from them, but the Lord knew. "Are ye able," He asked them, "to drink of the cup that I shall drink of (cf. Ps. xi. 6; Mt. xxvi. 39), and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with (cf. Lk. xii. 50)?" They fancied that He referred to the conflict which must be faced ere He won His throne—a sharp struggle issuing in sure victory; and they answered light-heartedly "We are able." It was vain to reason with them. Nothing but cruel experience would dispel their fond illusion, and He dismissed them with a promise and an admonition. The promise was that they would indeed share His cup and His baptism; and what this signified James realised when he suffered martyrdom by the sword of Herod Agrippa (cf. Ac. xii. 2), and John when he languished in exile on the Isle of Patmos (cf. Rev. i. 9). And what was the admonition? "To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give: it is for them for whom it hath been prepared." Here is St. Chrysostom's felicitous illustration of this cryptic saying. Suppose, he says, there is a contest in the arena, and two of the competing athletes who are friends of the umpire, approach him and beg that for their friendship's sake he should award them the prize. "This," he answers, "is not mine to give: it is theirs for whom it hath been prepared by their efforts and sweat." And even so, says our Lord, the crown of life is not a gift; it is a prize and it must be won (cf. Rev. iii. 21; 2 Tim. ii. 11).

The other disciples were naturally resentful of the crafty manœuvre, and our Lord stayed their indignation by reproving the worldly ambition which, so shamefully displayed by James and John, they were all cherishing alike. That was indeed the spirit which prevailed in earthly kingdoms, where greatness

lay in winning predominance and compelling service, but far other was the spirit of the Kingdom of Heaven. There greatness lay not in being served but in serving; and the spirit which they must cherish if they would attain the highest honour was that spirit of self-forgetting, self-sacrificing love which their Master had continually displayed before them and whereof He would soon furnish the supreme example.

3. *AT THE GATE OF JERICHO*

xx. 29–34

29 *And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.*

30 *And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.*

31 *And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.*

32 *And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?*

33 *They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.*

34 *So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.*

CONTINUING their journey they presently reached the city of Jericho, and there their progress was arrested. The story is told by all the three Synoptists (cf. Mk. x. 46–52; Lk. xviii. 35–43); and their narratives exhibit an embarrassing yet, when duly considered, instructive discrepancy. It is twofold. (1) According to St. Matthew there were two blind men, whereas according to St. Mark and St. Luke there was but one. (2) According to St. Matthew and St. Mark the incident occurred when they were leaving Jericho by the southern gate after passing through the city; whereas according to St. Luke it occurred as they approached from the north and were about to enter the city and pass through it (cf. xviii. 35, xix. 1).

What shall we make of this? St. Matthew's previous reduplication of the Gergesene demoniac (cf. viii. 28) warrants the assumption of a similar accident here. The reason there,

as we have seen, is plainly apparent ; and the reason here will appear no less plainly from the consideration of the other discrepancy. St. Luke puts it beyond question that this incident occurred at the entrance of the city, since he tells what occurred at the exit—our Lord's rencontre with Zacchæus (cf. Lk. xix. 1–10). As will appear in due course, it was their Jewish prejudice that moved the Jewish Evangelists to omit the latter incident ; and in early days when as yet there were no written Gospels and the evangelic narrative was orally preserved, what more natural than that confusion should arise regarding the venue when the sequence of events was thus concealed ? Two incidents had occurred on that memorable occasion, and when only one of these was related, it would easily be misplaced in oral narration, and no less naturally would the double scene lead to a doubling of the *dramatis persona*. Since not only is St. Matthew's account thus confused but with his peculiar concern for the sayings of our Lord he, after his wont, has abbreviated the narrative, we shall postpone our study of the incident until we reach St. Mark's full and picturesque report.

OUR LORD'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

xxi. 1–16

1 *And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,*

2 *Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.*

3 *And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.*

4 *All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,*

5 *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*

6 *And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,*

7 *And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.*

8 *And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.*

9 *And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*

10 *And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?*

11 *And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.*

12 *And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,*

13 *And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

14 *And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.*

15 *And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,*

16 *And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*

OBSERVE the course of events as defined by St. Luke and St. John. It was Friday evening when our Lord reached Jericho, and since on the Jewish reckoning the day ended and the new day began at six o'clock, the Sabbath was at hand. A distance of two miles was the limit of "a Sabbath Day's journey," and therefore He rested at Jericho beneath the hospitable roof of Zacchæus (cf. Lk. xix. 5) until the morning of the First Day of the Week. It would be evening ere He could accomplish the journey of some fifteen miles to Jerusalem by a steep road infested by brigands (cf. Lk. x. 30) and hence known as "the Ascent of Blood"; and He did not immediately enter the capital but, as St. John shows (cf. xii. 1), stayed overnight with Lazarus and his sisters at the village of Bethany.

In those days Jerusalem was crowded with worshippers who had come thither from near and far to celebrate the Passover. The wonder of His raising of Lazarus a few weeks ago was fresh in every mind. All were eager to see Him, and when they heard of His arrival at Bethany, they trooped out thither (cf. Jo. xi. 55, 56, xii. 9). Their enthusiasm suggested to Him the course which He should pursue. It would be perilous for Him to venture into the city, since the Sanhedrin had decreed His death and on His flight to Ephraim had issued an edict requiring that any one who knew of His whereabouts should lodge information in order to His arrest. To appear in the city would be to deliver Himself into the hands of His malignant and vigilant enemies; and though He had indeed come thither to die, He still had work to do and would not precipitate the inevitable end. What was the task which He would fain

accomplish ere He died? Jerusalem was the supreme disappointment of His earthly ministry. She had remained deaf to His appeals, and His last sojourn in her midst had been abruptly terminated by an attempt to stone Him to death (cf. Jo. x. 31, 39). And now that He was returning to be crucified, He was resolved that ere the crime was perpetrated He would make a final appeal to the obdurate city in the hope of even yet persuading her that He was indeed the Promised Saviour.

In the popular enthusiasm He recognised a way of securing Himself from immediate arrest and effecting His gracious purpose. He adopted a histrionic method which, strange as it appears to us, was characteristically Oriental and was frequently practised by the prophets of old (cf. 1 Ki. xi. 29–31; Ezk. iv. 1–3; Ac. xxi. 10, 11). There was an ancient prophecy (Zech. ix. 9) which depicted the entrance of the Messianic King of Israel into His sacred capital: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass." So rightly the Revised Version has it, but the Authorised Version, following the Greek Version of the Septuagint, reads "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass," thus making two animals; and our text, whether as it came from the pen of the Evangelist or as assimilated to the Greek Version by early copyists, reproduces this misconstruction of the Hebrew original. The other Evangelists have escaped the snare, introducing a single animal, which St. Mark (cf. xi. 2) and St. Luke (xix. 30) call "a colt" and St. John "a young ass" and "an ass's colt" (cf. xii. 14, 15). It was "a colt whereon yet never man had sat" (cf. Lk. xix. 30), and thus, according to the ancient idea (cf. 1 Sam. vi. 7; Jo. xix. 41), suited for sacred use. The eastern ass was a goodly creature, as large as a small horse and handsomely caparisoned with a rich saddle, swinging tassels, and a bridle studded with shells and silver. When kings went forth to battle, they rode on horses, but when they went on peaceful errands, they rode on asses; and here lies the significance of that ancient prophecy. It is a picture of the Messiah entering His capital as the Prince of Peace.

Our Lord's design was to enact that prophecy and thus

present His Messianic claim to the imagination of the thronging multitude. But how might He procure an ass? He had made provision for this need. Close to Bethany lay the village of Bethphage, where dwelt a friend, an unknown disciple, probably the master of one of the olive-orchards which gave the mountain its name; and he had promised our Lord the use of a colt. It was to be tethered that morning by the stable-door, and two of the disciples were to fetch it thence. That there might be no mistake they were to be furnished, after the manner of the time, with a watchword. On being challenged for unloosing the colt they were to say "The Lord hath need of it." So they did, and the Lord mounted the colt and rode in the midst of His disciples by the winding road down the slope of Mount Olivet. The populace had trooped out from Jerusalem, and they quickly recognised the fulfilment of that ancient prophecy and jubilantly hailed Him as their Messianic King. Their enthusiasm was boundless, and they zealously played their part in the sacred pageant. It was customary at a royal progress for the spectators to strew the road with flowers and foliage and even, like young Walter Raleigh, with their mantles; and the people observed the custom with wild exuberance. Thus they escorted the King down the mountain-slope, across the ravine of the Kidron, up to the city-gate, through the streets which, in the Evangelist's graphic phrase, were "moved"—"shaken as with an earthquake"—by their multitudinous tread, all the way to the Temple, chanting as they marched triumphal psalms (cf. Pss. cxviii. 25, 26, cxlviii. 1).

For our Lord, ever meek and lowly in heart, never striving nor crying nor making His voice heard in the streets (Mt. xi. 29, xii. 19), it was surely no triumph but a distressful ordeal. When the multitude at Bethsaida Julias would have "taken Him by force to make Him king," He evaded them and escaped to the neighbouring upland (cf. Jo. vi. 15); and wherefore should He now court the very experience which then He shunned? It was for Jerusalem's sake. It was His final appeal to her rulers and people; and His submission to an ordeal which His very soul must have loathed was His uttermost humiliation, the climax of His self-abasement.

The outer court of the Temple was Jerusalem's chief place of public concourse, much like the arched vault beneath old St. Paul's in London ; and thither our Lord betook Himself. Here St. Matthew and the other Synoptists (cf. Lk. xix. 45, 46 ; Mk. xi. 15–17) introduce that striking incident, His expulsion of the traders, which St. John (cf. ii. 13–17) puts three years earlier on the occasion of His first visit to the Passover after the beginning of His public ministry. That is unquestionably its proper position, and the reason why the Synoptists place it here is that, confining themselves to His Galilean ministry, they give no account either of that or of any other of the visits which He paid to Jerusalem in the course thereof and which would have been lost in oblivion but for the supplementary narrative of St. John. So far as their records go, we would not have known save by inference that He ever visited Jerusalem until He went thither to die. This incident, however, was too striking to be passed over in silence, and therefore they have inserted it here at the earliest opportunity in their narratives of the Passion Week. At the same time they reveal that this is not its historical position ; for, while St. Matthew and St. Luke assign it to the day of the Triumphal Entry, St. Mark (cf. xi. 12, 15) puts it on the day following. Moreover, while most fitting at the outset of His ministry amid the fresh wonder of His annunciation as the Messiah when as yet even the rulers were impressed, now that they were His avowed enemies so bold a defiance would have exasperated them. It was only the strength of the popular sentiment and the fear of exciting a riot should they molest Him that meanwhile restrained them (cf. Mk. xi. 18 ; Lk. xix. 47, 48), and so violent an aggression would have played into their hands by furnishing them with a legal pretext for taking action against Him.

Anxious to accomplish His gracious work, He was careful to avoid needless offence ; yet even so the rulers were bitter against Him. See how they showed it. Blind folk and cripples sought Him in the Temple-court, and He healed them, thereby winning fresh applause. The very children joined in the chorus, chanting refrains of the psalms which that morning had rung over the mountainside and through the streets. To the

Chief Priests and Scribes it seemed a desecration of the sacred precincts, and they remonstrated with Him for permitting it: "Hearest thou what these say?" "Yea" He answered gently, and reminded them of the Psalmist's words according to the Septuagint Version: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise" (Ps. viii. 2).

HIS HILLSIDE LODGING

xxi. 17–22

17 *And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.*

18 *Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.*

19 *And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.*

20 *And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!*

21 *Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.*

22 *And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

IT is natural to suppose that when He left the city and went out to Bethany, it was in the hospitable home of Lazarus and his sisters that He found a lodging for the night; but how then came it to pass that He went breakfastless next morning and would have plucked figs to stay His hunger on His way to the city? And moreover in the original the word "lodged" (occurring in the New Testament only here and in Lk. xxi. 37 R.V.) means properly "bivouacked," like an army encamping in the open. The explanation is that Bethany had a double signification, denoting not merely the village but the district covering the summit and western slope of Mount Olivet. St. Luke puts it plainly when he tells that during the Passion Week "every day He was teaching in the Temple, and every night He went out and bivouacked on Mount Olivet" (xxi. 37).

He had no lodging in the crowded city, and evening by evening when His day's ministry was ended, He repaired with the Twelve to Gethsemane (cf. Mt. xxvi. 36; Mk. xiv. 32; Lk. xxii. 39; Jo. xviii. 2), an olive-orchard on the mountain-side; and there, wrapped in their mantles, they slept beneath the blue Syrian sky. It was no hardship in that kindly climate, yet it must seem strange that He should have lain thus so near a friendly roof unless it be remembered that Lazarus was under the ban of the Sanhedrin (cf. Jo. xii. 10, 11), and the Lord would not imperil that dear home by resorting to it.

Here as so often St. Matthew compresses the narrative. It was as He returned to the city in the morning that He pronounced the fig-tree's doom, and not till the ensuing morning that the disciples observed the fulfilment thereof (cf. Mk. xi. 12, 13, 20–26). We shall in due course consider the incident as thus presented by St. Mark, meanwhile merely observing that St. Matthew here hastens over the second day of our Lord's sojourn at Jerusalem—an uneventful day devoted to quiet teaching in the Temple-court.

DISPUTATIONS IN THE TEMPLE-COURT (xxi. 23–xxii)

1. *QUESTION OF AUTHORITY*

xxi. 23–32

23 *And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?*

24 *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.*

25 *The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?*

26 *But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.*

27 *And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.*

28 *But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.*

29 *He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.*

30 *And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.*

31 *Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

IT was not of the rulers' good will that this second day passed thus peacefully. Gladly, had they dared, would they have dealt with our Lord out of hand, but He was encompassed by an admiring multitude, and they could only stand by in impotent chagrin (cf. Lk. xix. 47, 48), devising how they might put Him to confusion and have their will of Him without exciting a popular tumult. They soon found a way. It was that representatives of the rival parties of the Sadducees and the Pharisees should approach Him as He taught in the Temple-court and in seeming good faith submit to Him embarrassing questions with the purpose of either puzzling Him and so discrediting Him in the popular esteem or eliciting from Him some dangerous pronouncement which would expose Him to a charge of heresy or sedition. It was a cunning device, and they executed it cunningly; but He foiled each assault with masterly dexterity, and where they had looked for triumph, He put them to open shame.

Hardly had He resumed His teaching next morning when they fired their train. An imposing company approached Him—the Chief Priests, representing the Sadducees, and the Elders of the people, representing the Pharisees. There was only one actual Chief Priest, and of old the sacred office was hereditary and was held for life; but in those days it was in the gift of the Roman governor and the Herodian princes, who sold it to the highest bidder and naturally found frequent pretexts for declaring it vacant. A deposed Chief Priest still retained his title, and the dignitaries who now appear on the scene were the veteran Annas who by his astuteness had held office for ten years until his deposition by Valerius Gratus in 15 A.D., his successors Ismael, Eleasar, and Simon, and the acting Chief Priest, his son-in-law Caiaphas, who was *ex officio* President of the Sanhedrin. The Elders who accompanied them were Pharisaic members of that august court, and some of them

were Scribes or Rabbis (cf. Mk. xi. 27; Lk. xx. 1), learned Doctors of the Law.

They haughtily demanded of our Lord His authority for teaching in the Temple-court. On the face of it this was a reasonable question, one which they were entitled to ask. For the administration of the Temple belonged to the Priests and the teaching of the people was the business of the Scribes. They had a right to investigate the credentials of one who preached within the sacred precincts; and their expectation was that in justifying His action our Lord would, as He had already done (cf. Jo. x. 29–31), advance a claim which they might construe as blasphemy. He very well knew their purpose, and with that matchless resourcefulness which He always displayed in sudden emergencies, He declined a barren controversy and issued a counter-challenge: "What of John the Baptist's authority? Was his ministry of God or of men? Tell Me this, and I will answer your question." It was an embarrassing dilemma for them, and they stood silent. "Answer Me" He insisted (cf. Mk. xi. 30), and they held a hasty consultation. Their difficulty was that if they acknowledged John's divine commission, they condemned themselves for not believing him; whereas if they denied it, they would offend the popular sentiment (cf. xiv. 5) which at that crisis they were anxious to conciliate. "We do not know" they faltered.

It was a sore humiliation for those proud men, especially the learned Scribes, thus openly to plead ignorance, and He completed their discomfiture by a stinging indictment, putting it, for the profit of the attendant multitude, in a parable. "Son" or rather "My child," said the kindly father to the first of the two lads, "go work to-day in the vineyard"—not "my vineyard," since the home's good was a common interest. "I will not" was the blunt and undutiful answer, but presently the lad, stricken with compunction, bethought himself and went. Meanwhile the father had turned to his other son and bidden him go; and he, affecting horror at his brother's behaviour—a significant point obliterated in some modern texts which, following several ancient authorities, reverse the order of the two sons and for "the first" (ver. 31) read "the

latter"—obsequiously answered "I go, sir," but did not go. "Whether of the twain," asked the Lord, "did the father's will?" "The first" they answered, not without reluctance, since surely they perceived the drift of the parable. Their rejection of John's message, his demand for righteousness of heart, had revealed the hollowness of their zeal for ceremonial righteousness and proved them worse in God's sight, farther from the Kingdom of Heaven, than the despised outcasts who hearkened and repented.

(1) Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

xxi. 33–46

33 *Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:*

34 *And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.*

35 *And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.*

36 *Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.*

37 *But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.*

38 *But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.*

39 *And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.*

40 *When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?*

41 *They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*

42 *Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?*

43 *Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

44 *And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

45 *And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.*

46 *But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.*

WITH this stern sentence our Lord turned and addressed Himself to the people (cf. Lk. xx. 1) who had followed the encounter with lively interest. His discomfited assailants would gladly have withdrawn, but they were hemmed in by the crowd, and moreover they would be curious to hear what further He might say. Indeed it was fitting that they should hear it; for His message was a stern warning and an earnest appeal to impenitent Jerusalem. First, in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, He proclaimed the truth that every privilege is a trust, and unless we be diligent and faithful in the use of it, we shall surely be the losers: it will be taken from us and committed to worthier hands. It was a truth which His hearers had need to hear and lay to heart. They were God's chosen people, but in those days they had forgotten His purpose in choosing them. It was not for their own sakes merely but that "in them all the nations of the earth might be blessed." He had revealed His grace to them that they might tell it to others; but they had imagined themselves His exclusive favourites and regarded the rest of mankind as unclean outcasts. And moreover, conceiving that they had a monopoly of His grace, they had abused it. Since they were His chosen people, they argued that, do what they might, He was bound to them by His ancient covenant—the covenant which He had made with Abraham and his seed after him. The truth was that by thus abusing their privilege they had forfeited it, and unless they speedily repented, He would cast them off and find among the despised Gentiles His instruments for winning the world.

This solemn truth our Lord now proclaims. He describes how a landlord laid out a vineyard on his estate and furnished it with every needful equipment—a hedge to keep out destructive

beasts (cf. Ps. lxxx. 12, 13), a wine-press, and a watch-tower, where sentinels were posted night and day on the outlook for marauders. Having business elsewhere, he rented it to husbandmen. The agreement was that he should receive so much of the crop by way of rental; and at harvest-time he sent some of his servants—literally "slaves"—to obtain his due. The tenants, however, were lawless men and, emboldened by his absence, they refused payment and mishandled his messengers, beating one, killing another, and pelting a third with stones. When he was informed of the outrage, he treated it with generous forbearance. Perhaps it was a sudden ebullition of passion and they already regretted it; and so he sent another and larger band of messengers. The outrage was repeated, and still averse from severity he deputed his son—his "one beloved son" (Mk. xii. 6)—to visit the vineyard and appeal to them. Surely, he thought, they would reverence him. But his forbearance was unavailing. "This is the heir!" exclaimed the ruffians. "Come, let us kill him and take his inheritance." The master was far away, and if the heir were disposed of there would, they reckoned, be no one to challenge their possession.

It was a picture of the Jews and their behaviour all down the course of their history. God had sent to them His messengers the prophets in long succession, and as each was rejected, He sent still another and another, hoping to soften their obdurate hearts and turn them to repentance. But all in vain. "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" (Ac. vii. 52). And now He was making His final appeal. He had sent His "only begotten" (Jo. iii. 16), His "beloved Son" (Mt. iii. 17, ix. 7), and they would do worse by Him than ever their fathers had done by the prophets: they would "cast Him forth out of the vineyard and kill Him," even as it came to pass when He "suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12, 13) on the Hill of Calvary like a malefactor (cf. Lev. xxiv. 14; Num. xv. 35). That was the climax of Israel's unbelief, the completion of her long accumulating guilt; and it would be terribly visited (cf. Mt. xxiii. 37, 38).

The multitude had listened with that keen interest which a story always excites, especially in an Oriental audience; and

when our Lord paused and asked what the lord of the vineyard would do, they broke out: "Miserable men! he will miserably destroy them, and let out the vineyard to others," unwittingly passing sentence upon themselves and attesting the justice of the impending retribution—the rejection of the Jews and the transference of their abused privileges to the despised Gentiles. They did not, indeed, perceive the tragic moral, but the rulers did; and they protested in that Jewish phrase so frequent in the Pauline Epistles "God forbid!"—"Perish the thought!" (cf. Lk. xx. 16). "He beheld them," says St. Luke, or rather "He looked upon them" (cf. Mt. xix. 26), surveyed them with "those eyes of far perception." "Did ye never read"—ye learned Scribes—"in the Scriptures?" said He, and quoted a verse of that psalm which two days ago had echoed through the city (Ps. cxviii. 22). It was the triumphal song which after their return from the Babylonian Captivity the Jews had chanted as they marched in procession to their restored Temple on Mount Zion. They had rebuilt it as far as they might of the ruins of "the former House"; and tradition has it that despite the protestations of the builders the broken lintel of the ancient gateway had been replaced for the sake of its hallowed associations. The lesson which it preached was variously construed in after days, and here our Lord sees in it a token of God's grace to the despised Gentiles.

Observe (1) how in this parable our Lord asserts His own divine dignity. His claim is not merely that He was the last and greatest of the prophets. He was more than a prophet. The prophets were "slaves"; He was "the Only Begotten and Beloved Son," "the Heir" (cf. Heb. i. 1, 2). And (2) how He shows the long-suffering of God, His yearning to win men, His reluctance to cast them away. If this were merely a story and not a parable, "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," it would be open to the charge of improbability; for not only is it inconceivable that tenants should behave so monstrously but no landlord would ever have manifested such forbearance. Here precisely lies the truth of the parable. The ingratitude of man to man is as nothing to the ingratitude of man to God, and there is no earthly patience comparable to His (cf. Is. lv. 8, 9).

(2) Parable of the Wedding Feast

xxii. 1–14

1 *And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,*

2 *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,*

3 *And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.*

4 *Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.*

5 *But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:*

6 *And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*

7 *But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.*

8 *Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.*

9 *Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.*

10 *So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.*

11 *And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:*

12 *And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.*

13 *Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

14 *For many are called, but few are chosen.*

IT evinces our Lord's tender solicitude for impenitent Jerusalem and His eager desire to win her even at the last that He reiterates His warning of her impending doom and renews His appeal in parable after parable, employing always similar imagery that she might not miss His purpose. Here He follows up the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen with that of the Wedding Feast, which is an amplification of His earlier parable of the Great Supper (cf. Lk. xiv. 16–24).

The Jewish teachers in those days loved to depict the felicity of the Kingdom of Heaven by the image of a glad feast; and our Lord more than once adopted it (cf. Mt. viii. 11, 12; Lk. xiv. 15–24). Here He enriches the idea and represents the Heavenly Banquet as not merely a feast but a marriage feast. The Church is the Lord's bride whom He has won at a great cost.

> From Heaven He came and sought her
> To be His holy bride;
> With His own blood He bought her,
> And for her life He died.

He has gone away to prepare a home for her in that Blessed Country, and one day He will return and claim her and take her thither; and then "the marriage of the Lamb" will be celebrated with gladness and rejoicing, and "blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. xix. 7, 9).

This is the image of our parable. The Jews had been bidden to the marriage feast, and our Lord describes how they had treated the invitation. The Oriental custom was, and still is, that when a great man gave an entertainment, he first issued the invitations and then, when the time arrived, sent word to the invited guests: "Come, for all things are now ready." It would be the height of discourtesy to accept the

first invitation and then refuse the final summons; and this is what the guests in the parable did: "they would not come." The king treated them with singular forbearance. He sent other messengers to tell of his preparations and show what they were losing: "Will you miss all this good cheer? Is all my generosity to go for nothing?" But they were only the more obdurate. Some of them treated the appeal with contempt, and others abused and murdered the messengers; but they were all alike guilty, since indifference no less than enmity constitutes rejection of the Gospel. "An excuse," says Thomas Halyburton, "a delay in God's account, is a plain refusal." That sealed their doom. "The king was wroth; and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city"—a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in 70 A.D., that dread judgment on her obstinate impenitence.

Israel was rejected, but God's purpose was fulfilled. The king's banquet-chamber was not left unfurnished with guests. He turned to the outcasts of the city and gathered them to the feast from the highways and byways. By these our Lord signifies the despised Gentiles; and now, by way of admonition lest they should abuse their new-found privileges, He carries the parable farther and tells how, when the guests were gathered, the king entered to greet them and observed one among them —an impudent fellow who thought only of the feasting and had taken his place unkempt and sordid, offending his decent neighbours, polluting the palace, and insulting the royal presence. It was an inexcusable outrage, since not only were there slaves at the door of an Oriental banquet-chamber to receive the guests and perform their ablution but at a royal feast each guest was provided with a royal robe. It was not because he was too poor to purchase it but because he would not have it that this man had no wedding garment; and he was immediately and justly ejected.

It was a warning to the outcasts against lightly esteeming the grace so freely extended to them; and St. Paul afterwards addressed a like warning to his Gentile converts when he compared them to engrafted branches and admonished them that

should they prove unworthy, they would share the doom of the natural branches (cf. Rom. xi. 17–24). The rejection of the impenitent Jews would have been no gain to the Kingdom of Heaven had the Gentiles who were received in their room brought with them their Gentile uncleanness. And the abiding lesson is that, while the vilest of sinners are bidden to the feast, they must be cleansed and arrayed ere they take their places at table. And the Saviour who gives the invitation, gives also the cleansing and the dress to all who will receive them.

Is it not significant that only one such graceless guest should have been found in all that great gathering? Nor is the large charity of this judgment of our Lord annulled by His concluding aphorism: "Many are called but few are chosen" (interpolated also in xx. 16 but rightly omitted there in the Revised Version). For this is the Jewish form of a Greek proverb derived from the Dionysiac Mysteries: "Wandbearers are many but enthusiasts few," meaning that in every domain of life distinction is rare. On our Lord's lips it is an admonition that with the reinforcements of heavenly grace at our disposal we should in no wise be content with low attainments.

2. *QUESTION OF TRIBUTE*

xxii. 15–22

15 *Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.*

16 *And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.*

17 *Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?*

18 *But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?*

19 *Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a *penny.*

20 *And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and †superscription?*

21 *They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*

22 *When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.*

THIS was a dangerous question. The Jews were subject to the Romans, and there was nothing which so fretted their patriotic spirits as the tribute exacted of them by the heathen tyrant. See how astutely the rulers here proceed. The deputation which waited upon Him was representative of both parties. The Pharisees were represented by a company of their disciples—students of the Rabbinical college, who belonging to the patriotic party would naturally resent with

* In value seven pence halfpenny.
† Or, *inscription.*

youthful ardour the alien impost and sympathise with revolutionary aspirations. The Sadducees, on the other hand, were represented by a company of Herodians, courtiers of Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee (cf. exposition of xii. 14), who were then conveniently in Jerusalem attending the Passover. As Sadducees, always subservient to the ruling power, they would support the payment of the imperial tribute, but as courtiers of the native prince they would feel aggrieved at his subjection, and since our Lord was a Galilean, it would seem fitting that they should consult Him as their fellow countryman.

All this lent the deputation an aspect of good faith, and they submitted their question with hypocritical deference. It was, they professed, because they knew how true His teaching was and how fearlessly He bore Himself that they desired His judgment on this vexed question. "Tell us, then, what is thine opinion: Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" His position was indeed embarrassing. Had He declined to answer, they would have accused Him of cowardly evasion; and it was equally perilous to answer Yes or No. If He approved, He would offend the popular sentiment, while if He disapproved, He would be liable to a charge of treason. And the seriousness of the latter issue appears when it is remembered that it was actually on a charge of treason that He was condemned to crucifixion, and one count in the indictment was "forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar" (cf. Lk. xxiii. 2). It seemed a blank impasse; nevertheless He extricated Himself with consummate skill. "Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites—ye play-actors?" He cried, tearing off their disguise and displaying their trickery to the attentive multitude. "Show Me the tribute-coin." So destitute was He of worldly goods that he had none of His own. They handed Him a "penny"—a Roman *denarius*, the silver coin which the imperial government required in the payment of its taxes. It bore the Emperor's effigy and the legend CÆSAR AUGUSTUS DIVI F. PATER PATRIÆ. "Whose," He demanded, "is this image and superscription?" "Cæsar's" they answered. "Then," said He, "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

His argument was twofold. (1) For the avoidance of

racial strife in those days when the Jews were so widely dispersed the Jewish law had ordained that wherever a king's coinage was current, there his authority should be recognised. The mere fact that a Jew carried a *denarius* in his purse was an acknowledgment of the Roman supremacy, and thus His tempters had virtually answered their own question. "Shall we *give*?" they had asked; and He answered "Render" or "Pay." On their own confession the imperial tribute was a debt which they owed. (2) He intimated that there was another question which more nearly concerned every true-hearted Jew. Tribute was a debt which they owed to Cæsar; but what of the debt which they owed to God?

3. *QUESTION OF THE RESURRECTION*

xxii. 23–33

23 *The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,*

24 *Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.*

25 *Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:*

26 *Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the *seventh.*

27 *And last of all the woman died also.*

28 *Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.*

29 *Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*

30 *For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.*

31 *But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,*

32 *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

33 *And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.*

IT is the manner of allies to blame each other for defeat; and now after the discomfiture of those two deputations composed of representatives of the rival Jewish parties there "came to Him" not "the Sadducees" but "Sadducees," representatives of their party, confident of their controversial

* Gr. *seven.*

superiority. The religious distinction of the Sadducees was that they acknowledged only the Written Law, the five Books of Moses. They absolutely rejected the Unwritten Law, the Tradition of the Elders, which the Pharisees so highly exalted; and if they did not reject outright the Books of the Prophets and the other Sacred Writings, they certainly depreciated these and ascribed to them a far lesser authority, being actuated herein by a controversial interest. As the aristocratic party they reprobated popular innovations. It was comparatively late that the hope of immortality arose in Israel. It was revealed ever more surely to prophets and psalmists in days of national adversity, especially amid the sorrow of the Babylonian Captivity, as the sole vindication of the righteous providence of God. It nowhere appears in the Books of Moses, but it shines ever brighter and brighter in the later literature; and while the Scribes joyfully believed it and taught not only the immortality of the soul but the resurrection of the body, the Sadducees would have none of it. Content with worldly good, they maintained the earlier point of view, holding that "there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit" (cf. Ac. xxiii. 8).

Here those Sadducees saw an opportunity of confounding our Lord. It was so easy, they fancied, to disprove the notion of a physical resurrection; and they approached Him and presented a case which seemed to them a clear demonstration of its absurdity. There were, said they, seven brothers, and on the first dying childless the next, in accordance with the ancient levirate law (cf. Dt. xxv. 5–10), took his widow and "performed the part of a kinsman unto her" (cf. Ruth iii. 9–13) to raise up seed unto his brother, "that his name might not be blotted out of Israel." She had no issue by him, nor yet by any of the other five who after his decease successively performed their parts. Childless by them all, she also died; and the question was which of them should claim her as his wife at the Resurrection.

Not only was it a fictitious case, since the levirate law had been long obsolete, but the difficulty was unreal, since in terms of the ancient usage the woman remained the wife of her deceased husband. None of his brothers married her; each

merely performed a kinsman's part by her, and had she conceived by him, the child would have "succeeded in the name of his brother which was dead." It was indeed a frivolous question, and with good reason might our Lord have brushed it aside; but it revealed the shallowness of those arrogant scoffers, and He welcomed the opportunity of not merely putting them to shame but vindicating the truth in the hearing of the multitude. He charged them with double ignorance—ignorance of the Scriptures and ignorance of the power of God. See how He substantiates these charges, taking the latter first. The fallacy of their argument lay here—that they reasoned from the earthly to the heavenly, measuring the ideal by the actual and circumscribing God's possible within the limits of their own knowledge. They were like that Oriental potentate in Locke's *Chapter of Probability* who listened to a Dutch ambassador's account of his own country until he was told that in the winter men walked on the water there, and it would even support an elephant; and then he cried: "Now I am sure you lie!" Even such was the error of the Sadducees. What is impossible here they deemed impossible hereafter, projecting into the Unseen and Eternal the conditions of the seen and temporal. "At the Resurrection," says our Lord, "they neither marry nor"—not "are given in marriage" but—"do the marriage office, but are as God's angels in heaven." The relationship, the dear sacred affection, will continue; but, emancipated from its present limitations, it will be so transfigured and glorified that it will need a new name. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"; and when we are ushered into that realm of yet unimagined wonder and undreamed-of glory, how foolish our present incredulities will appear! "Ye do err, not knowing the power of God."

Furthermore they erred through ignorance of the Scriptures. They acknowledged the Books of Moses; and was it indeed so that, as they alleged, there was in these no intimation of immortality? He quoted from the Book of Exodus (iii. 6) the words which God spoke to Moses out of the midst of the

burning bush in the desert of Midian: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"; and then He pointed the lesson: "He is not a God of dead men but of living." What is the argument here? Is it merely that had the patriarchs been dead, it must have been written, not "I am," but "I was their God"? That would indeed have been the sort of verbal quibble wherein the Rabbis delighted; but deeper, far deeper, was the intention of our Lord, and it appears in the fuller declaration which St. Luke puts on his lips (cf. xx. 38): "He is not a God of dead men but of living; for all live unto Him." Where God has once loved He loves for ever; and here is the pledge of His people's immortality. If ever they perished, if ever they ceased to be, it were to Him an abiding loss, an impoverishment of His life, an emptying of His heart. What He has once loved must needs be immortal. And here is the pledge not alone of the immortality of their souls but of the resurrection of their bodies. For these too are precious in His sight; and, though they be mingled with the dust of the earth, they are safe in His keeping, and they will yet "spring to life immortal in the skies."

'Tis an old belief
  That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief,
  Dear friends shall meet once more,—

Beyond the sphere of time
  And sin and fate's control,
Serene in endless prime
  Of body and of soul.

And this "old belief" which our Lord here vindicates, He presently made for ever sure by His own Resurrection and Ascension.

4. *QUESTION OF THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT*

xxii. 34–40

34 *But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.*

35 *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,*

36 *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

37 *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

38 *This is the first and great commandment.*

39 *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

40 *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

OUR Lord's assailants had thought to put Him to confusion before the multitude, but they only enhanced His prestige. For "the multitude were astonished at His teaching," and St. Luke tells us (cf. xx. 39) that even some of the Scribes who had witnessed His encounter with the Sadducees, could not refrain from applause. "Teacher," they exclaimed, "thou hast well said." They were truly delighted with so masterly a defence of their doctrine of the Resurrection, and at the same time they were gratified by the discomfiture of their arrogant rivals. But they quickly remembered their quarrel with our Lord, and "gathering together" they hastily devised a fresh attack, thinking to win themselves credit by scoring a victory where their rivals had so ignominiously failed. One of them, a Lawyer, that is, a Rabbi versed in the interpretation of the Sacred Law, stepped forward and propounded a question. "Teacher," said he, "which is the great commandment in the Law?"

It was a vexed question. The Rabbis reckoned that there were 613 precepts in the Law, and there was much disputation as to their relative importance—which, as the phrase was, were "heavy" and which were "light." Attempts were made at classification and simplification. It was pointed out that the multitude of precepts had been reduced by the Psalmist to eleven (cf. Ps. xv), by the prophet Isaiah to eight (cf. Is. i. 16, 17), and by the prophet Micah to three (cf. Mic. vi. 8); and in our Lord's day it was a Rabbinical commonplace (cf. Lk. x. 27) that the Law was summarised in these two commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Dt. vi. 4, 5) and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18). It was indeed a felicitous definition of religious duty in its double aspect, Godward and manward; but the Scribe, thinking he had to do with an untaught Galilean, a stranger to the wisdom of the schools (cf. Jo. vii. 15), expected that our Lord would be puzzled by so disputatious a question, and he was taken aback when our Lord with manifest enjoyment pronounced in a tone of gracious condescension that *chef d'œuvre* of Rabbinical theology. His plot had miscarried; his hope of a dialectical triumph was quenched. Here St. Matthew ends the story, but St. Mark completes it (cf. xii. 32–34). "Of a truth, Teacher," said the Scribe, thinking to carry off his discomfiture and rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the multitude by a tone of didactic pomposity, "thou hast well said. For there is one God, and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." It was indeed a discreet turn, but it availed him nothing. With a sharp sentence our Lord pierced his swelling pretension. "Thou art not far," said He, "from the Kingdom of God." It was like His word to the Twelve in the Upper Room (Jo. xiii. 17): "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." One who knows what God requires is indeed but a step from the Kingdom; but if he merely knows without doing, he remains outside. And as well be a thousand miles away as just without the gate.

5. *DAVID'S SON AND DAVID'S LORD*

xxii. 41–46

41 *While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,*

42 *Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.*

43 *He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,*

44 *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?*

45 *If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?*

46 *And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.*

HERE ended the long conflict so triumphantly maintained by our Lord with the rulers. Their chosen champions had done their utmost to "entangle Him in His talk" or rather to "ensnare Him in argument" (cf. xxii. 15), and they had been caught in their own snares. "They durst not ask Him any more questions," and they would gladly have quitted the scene of their disgrace, but it was difficult for them to extricate themselves from the throng. The Pharisees were "gathered together" condoling with their crestfallen champion; and, assuming the offensive, He in His turn presented them with a question. "What think ye," said He, echoing their own phrase (cf. xxii. 17), "of Christ" or rather "the Christ—the Messiah? Whose son is He?"

It seemed a ridiculously simple question, and they answered disdainfully that He was the Son of David. What then, asked our Lord, of that ancient psalm (cx) which begins: "The Lord (Jehovah) said unto my lord, Sit thou at My right hand until I put thine enemies under thy feet"? In their interpretation

of the psalm the Rabbis proceeded upon two assumptions, one false and the other true, albeit in a larger sense than they conceived. Historically considered the psalm is, like the second psalm, a coronation ode, celebrating the king's enthronement as Jehovah's assessor and vicegerent (cf. 1 Ki. ii. 19 ; Ps. ii. 4, 6), and promising him by Jehovah's help a victorious reign. It is possible that the king was David, though the scene would seem rather to be laid in Maccabæan or Asmonæan days when, as in the case of Aristobulus, the regal and sacerdotal offices were united (cf. ver. 4). Who the psalmist was is unknown, though if the king were David, he might have been Nathan or Gad or some other contemporary prophet. Such is the account which the psalm gives of itself ; but the Rabbinical interpreters, ever covetous of " the shadow of a great name," ascribed it, like many others, to David, conceiving that he wrote it in prophetic rapture of his Lord, the Messiah. And indeed, though in a larger and deeper sense than they perceived, it had a Messianic reference and, as the New Testament recognises (cf. Ac. ii. 34–36 ; 1 Cor. xv. 25 ; Heb. i. 13, v. 6, vii. 17, 21, x. 13), found its ultimate fulfilment in our Lord. For, like all the ancient Scriptures, it had a forward look, and in telling of the victorious king the psalmist spoke more largely than he knew. His glowing ideal was never realised in David or any other of Israel's ancient kings ; but it was gloriously fulfilled by " great David's greater Son," the King Messiah.

See now what play our Lord makes with the exegetical ineptitude of those arrogant Rabbis. They held that the psalmist was David, and that he was speaking " in the spirit," that is, in prophetic vision, of the victorious Messiah when he wrote " Jehovah said unto my Lord." If, asks our Lord, the Messiah be David's son, how could David call Him " his lord " ? " My lord " was the reverential address of a son to a father, and it would, according to Jewish sentiment, have been a gross impropriety for a father so to designate his son. What could they answer ? Plainly one or other of their assumptions must go, but the abandonment of either would have been a public confession of error. They held their peace at the moment ; but afterwards they made their choice. Had they been wise,

they would have relinquished the notion of the Davidic authorship of the psalm; but they adopted the other alternative. Still insisting that it was written by David, they held that he wrote not of the Messiah but either retrospectively of the patriarch Abraham (cf. Gen. xiv. 17–24) or prospectively of the good king Hezekiah. The latter was the Jewish interpretation in the days of St. Justin Martyr and Tertullian.

What end had our Lord in view in dealing thus trenchantly with the Scribes' interpretation of that old psalm? His argument was a *reductio ad absurdum* of the fatuous notion of the Davidic authorship of the psalm, and it moreover administered to them a salutary and merited humiliation; but surely He had a larger end in view. And what was it but to bring home not only to the Scribes but to the listening multitude and indeed to His disciples as well the falsehood of the prevailing ideal of the Messiah? He was more than the Son of David, the victorious King of Israel; and even on their own interpretation thereof that ancient psalm proclaimed the truth which they were so slow to receive.

DENUNCIATION OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

(xxiii)

AFTER thus foiling their cunning assaults our Lord now hurls a stern and solemn denunciation against His adversaries. It is very significant that, though the Sadducees had borne their full part in the aggression, He leaves them aside and directs His rebuke against the Pharisees, and more especially their Scribes or Rabbis, discovering herein the spirit which animated Him. It was not personal resentment; for then He would have assailed the Sadducees too, since they hated Him no less than the Pharisees, and indeed it was their Chief Priests who presently bore the leading part in His arrest and condemnation. What moved Him was an earnest solicitude for the multitude. The aristocratic Sadducees were nothing to them; whereas the Pharisees were the popular party, and their Scribes were the teachers of the people. And therefore, for the deluded multitude's sake, He thus mercilessly pillories those "blind guides," reprobating their manners and their doctrines. It is surely the most terrible philippic that ever fell on human ears, all the more terrible that it was uttered by lips which were of wont so gracious. Yet it was no pitiless invective. It was styled of old not "a denunciation" but "a commiseration of the Scribes and Pharisees"; and we recognise the justice of the designation when we note the swelling recurrence of that refrain "Woe unto you!" and remember (cf. xi. 21) that it truly means "Alas for you!" It is, like the Scottish "Wae's me for you!" no imprecation but a pitiful lament—a lament for opportunities neglected and talents misused.

1. *ADMONITION OF THE BYSTANDERS*

xxiii. 1–12

1 *Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,*

2 *Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:*

3 *All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.*

4 *For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

5 *But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,*

6 *And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,*

7 *And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.*

8 *But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.*

9 *And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.*

10 *Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.*

11 *But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.*

12 *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

FIRST He addresses the multitude and His disciples, thus proving at the outset that they were His concern. He addresses them, but the Scribes, standing before Him in baffled wrath, were His theme. His opening sentence is significant. A mere demagogue so harassed and menaced would have incited his hearers against the rulers and stirred

their hearts and minds to mutiny and rage ; but our Lord loved the people too well to deal with them thus. It is a wise saying of the Greek sage Heraclitus that " the people should fight for the law as for a rampart." It is their bulwark against oppression, and anarchy leaves them defenceless. The Scribes were the interpreters and guardians of the Law, and therefore, while roundly censuring their manners, our Lord inculcates reverence for their august office and observance of their ordinances. " Whatsoever they bid you, observe and do, but do not ye after their works."

And now by way of enforcing the admonition He alleges (1) the oppressiveness of their ceremonial requirements. They made the Sacred Law, as we have seen, for example, in the matter of Sabbath-observance (cf. xii. 1–8), " a heavy burden and grievous to be borne " ; and their condemnation was that by their casuistical evasions they absolved themselves from the burden which they laid on others. (2) Their self-glorification. " All their works they do to be a spectacle unto men " (cf. vi. 1). Look at their attire. Even as it was the fashion in the days of St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom for devotees to deck themselves with sacred emblems such as little Gospels and fragments of the Cross, so was it the fashion for a Jew, in literal obedience to the precept of reverent remembrance (cf. Ex. xiii. 9, 16 ; Dt. vi. 8, xi. 18), to wear " phylacteries " as they were called in later days on the forehead and left arm—strips of parchment inscribed with four passages of the Law (Ex. xiii. 3–10, 11–16 ; Dt. vi. 5–9, xi. 13–21), and in obedience to another precept (cf. Num. xv. 38–40 ; Dt. xxii. 12) to garnish the four corners of his mantle with a fringe or border or rather a tassel. And the Scribes " made their phylacteries broad and their tassels long." Moreover they claimed the places of honour at feasts (cf. Lk. xiv. 7) and occupied the front seats in the synagogues. But nowhere did they so sin against their sacred office as in their assertion of its dignity and their pride in its honorific titles. One, the commonest, of these was *Rabbi*, " my Master." Another, afterwards assumed by their congeners in the Christian Church, was *Ab*, " Father." And a third, unfortunately translated " Master " in our Version, was

"Leader" or "Guide." In modern Greek the word signifies "a Professor"; and it was represented in mediæval Latin by *director*, the Father Confessor who "directed" the conscience. In themselves such titles were perfectly innocent, and indeed it is an instinct at once of natural affection and of grateful reverence in a disciple to honour a teacher who has opened to him the treasures of sacred lore and introduced him to a deeper and fuller knowledge of God; and they served as an inspiration and an incentive to a true teacher who realised that he was himself but a humble learner, needing the continual guidance of "the One Director, even the Christ—the Messiah." But with the Scribes they were wholly mischievous, ministering to their arrogance; and it was this that our Lord condemned—the spirit which moved those proud dignitaries to usurp dominion over the minds and consciences of men. "To do as the prelates of the Church, in all ages, have done," says Richard Baxter, "—to strive for precedency, and fill the world with vile contentions about the dignity and superiority of their seats,—doth shew that they much forget the nature and work of that office which they strive about. I seldom see men strive so furiously who shall go first to a poor man's cottage to teach him and his family the way to heaven; or who shall first endeavour the conversion of a sinner; or first become the servant of all."

2. *INDICTMENT OF THE SCRIBES*

xxiii. 13–36

13 *But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

14 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.*

15 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*

16 *Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!*

17 *Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?*

18 *And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.*

19 *Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?*

20 *Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.*

21 *And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.*

22 *And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.*

23 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and *anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

* Gr. *ανηθον, dill.*

24 *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

25 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.*

26 *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

27 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

28 *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

29 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,*

30 *And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.*

31 *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.*

32 *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.*

33 *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

34 *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:*

35 *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*

36 *Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.*

HERE our Lord's admonition of the multitude abruptly ends. Was it an angry protest from the group of Scribes that moved Him to turn thus suddenly upon them and overwhelm them with so crushing an indictment? He flings in their faces a succession of notorious and damning

iniquities, prefacing each charge with that sentence of doom "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, play-actors!" At the outset He sums up their guilt by telling them that they, "the Teachers of Israel" as they were, "shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces, neither entering themselves nor letting others enter"; and then He proceeds to specific charges.

The first—wanting in St. Matthew's report according to the best manuscripts (cf. R.V.), but certainly, on the testimony of St. Mark (xii. 40) and St. Luke (xx. 47), a count in the indictment—is the heartless rapacity of their official exactions. In our own land in pre-Reformation days no sooner had a peasant breathed his last than the greedy priest, regardless of the weeping widow and orphans, enforced his prerogative of *cors-presant* by claiming the best cow, the coverlet of the dead man's bed, and the best of his raiment. Such, though perhaps less gross, is the inhumanity which our Lord here lays to the charge of the Scribes: they "devoured widows' houses, making the while, to their heavier condemnation, long prayers." And it corroborates the allegation that in those days it was a common saying when a widow was left destitute that "the stroke of the Pharisees had touched her."

The Jews were zealous proselytisers, not always in the spirit of the good Rabbi Hillel's precept "Love the creation, and bring it nigh unto the Law," but rather for their own glory and the profit which the accession of wealthy Gentiles brought them (cf. exposition of viii. 5). "Ye scour sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he is won, ye make him a son of Gehenna"—a moral reprobate (cf. v. 22)—"twice as bad as yourselves." What does this mean? Consider the next count in the indictment. The Scribes were masters of casuistry especially in the matter of oaths, matching herein the cunning of Louis XI who "admitted to one or two peculiar forms of oath the force of a binding obligation which he denied to all others, strictly preserving the secret, which mode of swearing he really accounted obligatory, as one of the most valuable of state mysteries." Thus, an oath by the Temple or rather the Sanctuary—the inner shrine with its two chambers, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies—solemn as it seemed, carried

no obligation; but swear by the gold of the Sanctuary, thus classing your money with the sacred treasure, and it were sacrilege to violate your oath. Similarly an oath by the altar was nothing, but an oath by the offering was binding. Again, in Jewish parlance "heaven" was an ambiguous term. If it meant merely "the sky," then an oath by heaven was nothing; but it was also a reverential substitute for "God," and an oath by Heaven in this sense was binding. Such distinctions were useful in doing business with one unacquainted with them; nor, as Latin literature testifies, were the Jews slow in using the advantage in their dealings with strangers. And it is little wonder that rascals espoused so convenient a religion, and that proselytes were in ill odour with decent Jews who called them "the scurf of Israel."

While practising such trickery and ignoring the Law's weighty requirements of "judgment, mercy, and faith" (cf. Mic. vi. 8), the Scribes were punctilious in cheap observance of its trivialities, tithing not merely all their incomes, the produce of their fields and flocks (cf. Lev. xxvii. 26–33; Lk. xviii. 12), but their kitchen herbs and spices. "Blind guides," cries our Lord, hitting them off in proverbial phrase, "straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel (our Version's "strain *at*" is a printer's error overlooked by King James's translators), cleansing the outside of cup and platter and leaving them foul within!" Since there was ceremonial pollution in contact with the dead, it was required that, lest men should inadvertently stumble upon them (cf. Lk. xi. 44), sepulchres should be conspicuously painted white. They were fresh painted after the rainy season, and as our Lord spoke, the burial-places on the slope of Olivet were gleaming in the April sunshine, pure and fair to the eye though full of corruption. "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, play-actors! ye are like whited sepulchres." And yonder on the shoulder of the mountain stood the stately cenotaph which the men of later days had erected to the revered memory of the Prophets whom their fathers had persecuted and slain. But what availed their condemnation of their fathers' crimes when all the while they were doing the like? As their fathers had banished Jeremiah and sawn Isaiah asunder, so had they

slain John the Baptist, so were they plotting the death of a greater than John, and so would they do to His Apostles, thus filling up the measure of their fathers' sin and serving themselves heirs to their guilt. The day of reckoning was at hand, the day of Jerusalem's destruction ; and then they would answer for every drop of righteous blood which their fathers had spilt. "From the blood of Abel," says our Lord, "to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom ye slew between the Sanctuary and the Altar" (cf. 2 Chr. xxiv. 20–24) ; and here two difficulties present themselves. (1) This Zechariah was the son of Jehoiada. "The son of Berechiah," omitted here by several manuscripts and lacking in the parallel passage of St. Luke (cf. xi. 51), is an interpolation by an early copyist who had in his mind the better known Zechariah, the minor prophet (cf. Zech. i. 1). (2) Since it was during the reign of Joash (836–798 B.C.) that he was thus sacrilegiously murdered, Zechariah was far from the latest of Israel's martyrs. But the story is told in the Second Book of Chronicles, and since in the Hebrew Bible this book closes the sacred volume, our Lord means here every martyrdom recorded in Scripture from the first page to the last.

3. *LAMENT FOR JERUSALEM*

xxiii. 37–39

37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

38 *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

39 *For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

THAT was our Lord's last appeal to Jerusalem. Never more would He teach in the Temple-court, never more reason with her rulers or walk among her people with comfort on His lips and healing in His hand. His public ministry was ended; and ere He took His departure He surveyed the city which He loved so well and had so earnestly desired, and a lamentation broke from His lips: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that have been sent unto her!" Judgment was hovering over her like a bird of prey over a defenceless nest. Fain would He have gathered her children as a hen gathers her brood under her sheltering wings: He would, but she would not. And now her house was left unto her desolate. Yet even as He left her thus, He saw far off the dawn to a happier day. He knew what St. Paul afterwards so resolutely believed—that in her desolation the heart of Israel would surely turn at the long last to the Saviour whom she had rejected and join in that chorus which but the other day had greeted His entry (cf. xxi. 9): "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

DISCOURSE ON THINGS TO COME (xxiv, xxv)

1. *QUESTION OF THE DISCIPLES*

xxiv. 1–3

1 *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.*

2 *And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

3 *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

EVENING was now closing in, and it was time for our Lord and the Twelve to withdraw from the city to their nightly retreat on Mount Olivet. As He "quitted the Temple and went on His way," they somewhat timidly discovered to Him the thoughts of their troubled hearts. The Temple, built by Herod the Great with lavish expenditure and that architectural magnificence which was a passion with the Herodian princes, was an imposing pile. "The outward face of it," says the Jewish historian, "lacked nothing to astonish the mind or the eyes." To strangers who beheld from afar its walls of gilded marble gleaming in the sunrise, it was like a snowclad mountain; and they marvelled yet more as they drew near and marked the massiveness of the blocks of marble, some of them forty-five cubits in length, five in height, and six in breadth. It was no novel spectacle to the Twelve, and they were wont to pass it without comment; but this evening they surveyed it and called the Lord's attention to it. "Master," said they (cf. Mk. xiii. 1), "see what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!"

What did they mean? They were disquieted by the scene

which they had witnessed in the Temple-court. Surely the Master had been reckless in His defiance of the rulers, fenced about as they were by such authority and magnificence. And surely it was incredible that a pile so massive, so enduring, was on the eve of destruction. With quiet emphasis He reaffirmed the impending disaster; and they said no more but followed Him with troubled hearts to their retreat. They said nothing to Him by the way, but they talked among themselves and agreed that ere lying down to rest they should appeal to Him for a more explicit pronouncement. And as He sat on the hillside "over against the Temple" (Mk. xiii. 3), wistfully surveying it across the Valley of the Kidron, Peter and James and John with Andrew who had latterly shared their special intimacy with the Master, approached Him and made their request. They craved light not merely on His present prediction of the destruction of the Temple—"when shall these things be?"—but on two others which they had previously heard from His lips—"His coming" (cf. x. 23, xvi. 28) and "the end of the world" (cf. xiii. 39, 40, 49), or rather "the consummation of the age" (cf. exposition of xiii. 40).

2. *THE FALL OF JERUSALEM*

xxiv. 4–28

4 *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.*

5 *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

6 *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

7 *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*

8 *All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

9 *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*

10 *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*

11 *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*

12 *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

13 *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

14 *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

15 *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)*

16 *Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains:*

17 *Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:*

18 *Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

19 *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!*

20 *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:*

21 *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

22 *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

23 *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.*

24 *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

25 *Behold, I have told you before.*

26 *Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.*

27 *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

28 *For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

AS we have seen (cf. x. 23), this phrase, "the coming of the Lord," signifies in New Testament parlance any providential visitation demonstrating His presence and power; and here it denotes that dread dispensation—the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Already the course of events was plain to every dispassionate observer, familiar with the thoughts which were stirring in the minds of the Jewish people and with the methods of imperial Rome, so patient of disaffection in her subject provinces yet so ruthless when the limit of forbearance had been exceeded; and the picture which our Lord here paints is no literal forecast of the impending calamity but an admonition to His disciples how they should bear themselves

in face of the inevitable ordeal. Though it was the sacred capital that bore the chief brunt, the whole land was involved, nor were Jewish settlers in heathen lands exempt, since they too shared the disaffection and felt the weight of Rome's avenging hand. "Take heed," says our Lord, "that no man deceive you" or rather "lead you astray"; and it was a needful exhortation. For, in the first place, the insurrection was "a holy war," inspired like all Jewish rebellions by Messianic enthusiasm, a desperate enterprise of indignant patriots seeking "in the name" not "of Christ" but "of the Christ" to win national independence by force of arms and establish the Kingdom of Heaven; and since the disciples, as we have so often seen, still clung to that Jewish ideal, they might well in the first flush of the uprising be tempted to espouse the desperate cause. By and by they would be exposed to a different temptation. When the land was visited by the horrors of war—famine, pestilence, and commotion, and the people were distracted, as we see them on the pages of Josephus, by divided councils, some eager to make peace on any terms and others resolute to fight to the bitter end, hating and betraying one another, they would be prone to despair and give ear to the seducing voices of false prophets. And in view of all this our Lord here presents four strong counsels.

1. He bids them recognise the providential significance of such dread happenings. "All these," He says, "are the beginning of sorrows." Did He mean that, terrible as their experience would be, there was worse in store, and they would encounter merely the first blast of the devastating storm? Surely that were a cheerless announcement, and in truth it is a better consolation which He ministers here. Rightly rendered the sentence runs: "All these are the beginning of travail-pangs," the anguish inseparable from the birth of a new world, a better and nobler order; and He reiterated the uplifting assurance on the night of His betrayal when He said to the Eleven (Jo. xvi. 21): "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." This is

the consolation which faith affords alike to men and to nations in every time of stress, that through the sorrow and suffering a Sovereign Will is working out its unerring way and accomplishing its hidden purpose of goodness and mercy.

> Then, welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

2. Meanwhile how should they employ themselves? Already in giving them their apostolic commission He had charged them to address themselves in the first instance to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and had warned them that the time was short and they would hardly accomplish their task ere the dread judgment fell (cf. x. 23). And now He tells them further that it was not enough that the cities of Israel should hear His message. They would reject it; and that it might not perish from the earth when the Holy Land was devastated and its inhabitants dispersed, it must be proclaimed far and wide and find a home and a welcome in other lands and other hearts (cf. ver. 14).

3. It would be fatal to that enterprise if His disciples, the repositories and guardians of the Evangel, perished in the national ruin; and therefore He gives an explicit charge that on the approach of the disaster they should quit the doomed city and her environs. And what should be the signal for their departure? "When ye see 'the abomination of desolation' standing in the Holy Place." The phrase is taken from the Book of Daniel (cf. ix. 26, 27, xi. 31, xii. 11), that noble apocalypse which was written to cheer the Jews in their sufferings under Antiochus Epiphanes and which was peculiarly esteemed by their descendants in our Lord's day by reason of the suitability of its message. The original reference is to that hideous desecration in December, 168 B.C.—the erection of an altar to Olympian Zeus in the Temple-court (cf. 1 Macc. i. 54, 59, vi. 7; 2 Macc. vi. 11); and our Lord now warns His disciples

that when they witnessed a like impiety, it would be time for them to be gone, making no delay. If one had retired to his housetop like Peter at Joppa (cf. Ac. x. 9), he must hasten thence without entering his house; nor if one were at work in his field outside the city, should he go home for his cloak.

Our Lord's admonition was remembered and obeyed. It is very remarkable that the occasion of the rebellion which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem was a sacrilege—"an abomination of desolation"—perpetrated by the Roman procurator Gessius Florus, who, in the month of May, 66 A.D., invaded the Temple and plundered the sacred treasury of seventeen talents—some £4,000. The outrage fanned the smouldering embers of disaffection and set the land aflame; and the Christians forthwith migrated over the Jordan and found a secure asylum in the Gentile city of Pella, "in accordance," says the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius, "with a certain oracle given by revelation to approved men"—surely nothing else than this charge of our Lord, which the Apostles had preserved and transmitted to their successors. They had remembered and obeyed His admonition to pray that for the sake of the helpless women and children their flight might not be in the winter nor on the Sabbath day when the religious scrupulosity so ingrained in the minds of the Jewish Christians (cf. Lk. xxiii. 56) would have embarrassed their departure. In the former particular at all events their prayer was granted, since it was in the month of May that they saw "the abomination of desolation" standing in the Holy Place.

It was probably at Pella that our Gospel was written as an appeal to the Jews to recognise in the day of their calamity the Saviour whom they had rejected; and even as, with this end in view, the Evangelist constantly adduces prophetic evidences of the Messiahship of our Lord, so here he inserts that significant parenthesis "Whoso readeth, let him understand" or rather "Let the reader understand." It is a direction to Christian teachers that in reading those passages in the Book of Daniel they should be careful to point out their fulfilment to their Jewish hearers.

4. Finally our Lord reverts to His initial admonition (cf. vers. 4, 5). It was inevitable that in those distressful days impostors should arise, whether crazed enthusiasts or knavish adventurers, and play upon the people's hopes and fears—false Messiahs and false prophets (cf. exposition of iv. 5–7); and He warns His disciples to turn a deaf ear to every vain counsel, whether an apocalyptic vision of a studious recluse in his secret chamber or the voice of one crying, like John the Baptist, in the wilderness. He had plainly forewarned them of the inevitable issue, and they must await it with fearless assurance. For it was God's judgment, and it would not fall at random. "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." What does this mean? It is a grim metaphor of the desert, proclaiming an eternal truth of the moral order—that wherever there is evil on the earth, there soon or late judgment will fall. "It was a bright Syrian day," says a traveller, "and there was not a speck on the sky from horizon to horizon. But soon a vulture appeared, so high up in the blue vault that it did not seem bigger than a lark. Whether guided by scent or by sight, it came without delay, and with unerring precision steered its course to the dead camel. A veritable bolt from the blue, it dropped on its victim. But the feast was not to be a solitary affair. Soon the air became filled with vultures, screaming and hastening to their prey, and, foul in talon and red in beak, they greedily settled on their victim. And have they not their uses, in helping kindly nature to bury dead things out of sight?" The scavenger birds are emblems of God's moral judgments which will endure no wicked thing before His eyes. It is the unclean vultures that perform this gruesome yet beneficent office; and when our Lord spoke rather of "the eagles," He was thinking of Rome's eagle-standards. The word is an interpretation of the parable.

3. *THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE*

xxiv. 29–51

29 *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken :*

30 *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

31 *And he shall send his angels *with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

32 *Now learn a parable of the fig-tree ; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh :*

33 *So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that †it is near, even at the doors.*

34 *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

35 *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

36 *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*

37 *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

38 *For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,*

39 *And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

* Or, *with a trumpet, and a great voice.* † Or, *he.*

40 *Then shall two be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*

41 *Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*

42 *Watch therefore : for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

43 *But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.*

44 *Therefore be ye also ready : for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

45 *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season ?*

46 *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

47 *Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.*

48 *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming ;*

49 *And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken ;*

50 *The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,*

51 *And shall *cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

HERE we are confronted by a palpable contradiction. On the one hand, our Lord is represented as affirming explicitly and emphatically that the final consummation, which after the lapse of nigh two thousand years remains still unaccomplished, would happen "immediately after the tribulation of those days" and within the lifetime of His generation (cf. ver. 34). And, on the other hand, He affirmed no less explicitly and emphatically (cf. ver. 36) that no one knew the

* Or, *cut him off.*

day and hour of the final consummation but the Father only—no one else, "no, not the angels of Heaven, neither," according to the best manuscripts (cf. Mk. xiii. 32), "the Son." The sole certainty was that, like the Flood of old and indeed every other historic crisis, it will come in such an hour as we think not; and therefore it behoves us to be always ready, according to that saying of St. Augustine: "The Last Day is hidden that all days may be observed." "God," said the Hermit of Engaddi, "will not have us break into His council-house or spy out His hidden mysteries. We must wait His time with watching and prayer, with fear and hope." Thus our Lord admonished His disciples, and how is it that in the same breath He told them that the consummation was imminent and would arrive ere that generation passed away?

The explanation lies in the fact that despite His admonition here and elsewhere the primitive Christians, in their impatience of adversity, fondly believed that He would soon come again in His glory. *Maran atha* ("The Lord is at hand") was the greeting wherewith they were wont to cheer each other (cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 22; Phil. iv. 5). They were sure that He would appear within that generation, and the fancy wrought grievous mischief. Among St. Paul's converts at Thessalonica there were enthusiasts who, neglecting their daily business, kept scanning the heavens for the sign of His appearing. And as the years passed and the expectation was still unfulfilled, the Church's faith was sorely tried (cf. 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4). The Evangelists shared the common idea, and it shaped their reports of His discourse on things to come. Deeply interested as they were in the theme, and eagerly as they hung on the Master's lips while He talked to them that night on the mountainside, it would be only fragments of His discourse that the Twelve retained and were able afterwards to repeat. These fragments were all the material that the Evangelists had at their disposal; and it appears that they eked them out with other memorable sayings of the Lord on things to come, since one section of the discourse as reported by St. Matthew is given by St. Luke in a different and evidently the historical connection (cf. xvii. 23–37). What wonder that their arrangement of their scattered material

was shaped by their presupposition of an imminent consummation? What wonder that St. Matthew and St. Mark put our Lord's return in glory hard after the fall of Jerusalem? "Immediately after the tribulation of those days" says the former; "But in those days after that tribulation" says the latter (xiii. 24); while St. Luke, writing later when already the expectation of an immediate consummation was being shaken, eschews chronological definition (cf. xxi. 25). And what of our Lord's intimation: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"? It is to the destruction of Jerusalem that He is here referring, and the passage (vers. 32–35; cf. Mk. xiii. 28–31; Lk. xxi. 29–33) belongs to the former section of the discourse. Read it after ver. 28, and all is plain. Our Lord first forewarns the Twelve of the national judgment which was even then looming on the horizon, and He tells them that it would surely come within that generation. Then, passing to the final consummation, He tells them that the time thereof lies in the Father's secret councils. It might be soon, but it might and, as He presently indicates (cf. xxv. 5, 19), doubtless would be long delayed; and He warns us that, in view of the certainty of the event and the uncertainty of its date, it becomes us to be ever ready, lest we be taken by surprise. Perhaps it was here that He spoke that "unwritten saying" preserved by St. Justin Martyr: "In whatsoever employments I may surprise you, therein also will I judge you."

4. *PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS*

XXV. 1–13

1 *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*

2 *And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

3 *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:*

4 *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

5 *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

6 *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*

7 *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.*

8 *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are *gone out.*

9 *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

10 *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.*

11 *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.*

12 *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

13 *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

"WATCH and be ever ready" is our Lord's first admonition, and now He enforces it by a parable. An eastern wedding was celebrated after nightfall. The scene was usually the house of the bride's father, and thither the bridegroom was escorted by a band of maidens, friends of the bride,

* Or, *going out.*

with lighted lamps ; and after the wedding the company made merry at a banquet of the bridegroom's providing (cf. Jud. xiv. 10). The bridegroom in the parable resided at a distance, and at nightfall the bride's maids, ten in number, went out to meet him as far as the city-gate. Travel was uncertain in those days, and he was detained by the way. Meanwhile the maidens sat waiting for him in the shelter of the wide archway, and as the hours passed, " they all slumbered and slept " or rather " grew drowsy and fell asleep." At midnight they were roused by the porter. " Here is the bridegroom ! " he cried. " Come out to meet him." Up they all started, and found that while they slept, their lamps had burned to the socket. It was easy to trim the wicks, but the cups needed replenishing with oil ; and the emergency revealed a difference between the maidens. Five of them were " wise " or, as the word rather signifies (cf. vii. 24), " provident " ; and they had brought their oil-flasks with them in case of need. The others had made no such provision, and when they saw their companions replenishing their lamps, they begged a share of their supply. "Our lamps are going out " they pleaded. " No " was the answer, dictated not by selfishness but by apprehension of further delay ; " peradventure there will not be enough for us and you. Away to the merchants and buy for yourselves." They hurried off, but it was long ere they could procure a supply at so untimeous an hour, and when they returned, the procession had formed and gone its way. They hastened to the house only to find the door fast shut. The bridegroom as the host answered their knock, but he did not know them and refused them admission.

> Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet ?
> O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet !
> No, no, too late ! ye cannot enter now.

It seems a hard doom ; but is there not here a gracious lesson ? Had the foolish virgins simply fallen into the procession with their dark lamps, they would at least have honoured the bridegroom by their presence, and surely he would not have closed the door against them. Albeit ingloriously, they would have been admitted and would have shared the wedding-feast. And

the lesson is that even a tardy faith, even a "death-bed repentance," suffices. It is indeed ignoble to withhold one's best days from the Saviour's service and offer Him the sorry dregs of a wasted life; but to the very last He will "in no wise cast out," and it is never too late to seek His blessed face. Better be "scarcely saved" than be shut out; ay, but better far win "an abundant entrance." Better that a ship be towed into harbour a broken hulk than that she go down at sea; but better far that she should sail home with her sails spread and her flag flying.

Beware of excessive spiritualising of the parable after the manner of the Fathers and too many modern interpreters. Thus, according to St. Chrysostom, the lamps signify the grace of virginity, the oil philanthropy, the sellers the poor who afford opportunity for almsgiving, the sleep of the virgins death, while the cry at midnight (cf. 1 Th. iv. 16) proves that it will be night when our Lord returns. All this merely distracts attention from the purpose of the parable, its inculcation of the duty of watching and being prepared. "Some," says Calvin, "greatly torment themselves about the lamps, the vessels, the oil; but the simple and real gist is that eager zeal for a brief space does not suffice unless unwearied constancy be added thereto."

5. *PARABLE OF THE TALENTS*

XXV. 14–30

14 *For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.*

15 *And unto one he gave five *talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*

16 *Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.*

17 *And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.*

18 *But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.*

19 *After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.*

20 *And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.*

21 *His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

22 *He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.*

23 *His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

24 *Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:*

*A talent is 187*l.* 10*s.*

25 *And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.*

26 *His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:*

27 *Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*

28 *Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.*

29 *For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*

30 *And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

"WATCH" is our Lord's first admonition in view of the uncertainty of the final consummation; and His second is "Work." It is told that once early in the eighteenth century, when the legislature of Connecticut was in session, the sun was darkened by an eclipse. So deep was the gloom that a cry was raised that the Last Day was come. Amid the general consternation an old Puritan arose and, calmly alleging that if the Lord were indeed at hand, it were well that He should find His servants at their appointed work, moved that candles be brought and the House proceed with its business. And even so our Lord admonishes His disciples. "Be ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh"; and the best preparation lies in devotion to the work which He has given us to do. He tells how a wealthy merchant had occasion to leave home on a distant expedition, and ere his departure, that his estate might not suffer by his absence, he entrusted his free capital to three of his retainers whom he deemed most capable, apportioning their responsibilities according to their abilities. One he entrusted with £1,000 (a talent being worth a little over £200), the second with £400, and the third with £200. The first and

second played their parts well, amply justifying their master's confidence. By diligent and skilful enterprise each doubled his trust. But what of the third? Oblivious of his lesser merit, he resented the affront, as he deemed it, which had been put upon him in that he had been entrusted with so much less than the others. Why, he reasoned, should he take pains for so unjust a master? All that he might earn would pass to that greedy and unfeeling churl, and he would get no thanks. Why should he, in proverbial phrase (cf. Jo. iv. 37, 38), "sow that another might reap"? A rogue might have made off with his trust; but this was no rogue: he was merely discontented and slothful. He would take no trouble for a master who had treated him so scurvily, but he would not rob him. He would keep his trust safe and return it just as he had received it. And so he took the old-world way (cf. xiii. 44) and buried his talent in the ground.

The merchant's sojourn abroad was unexpectedly protracted, but at length he arrived home; and after the eastern fashion his return was celebrated with feasting. While the banquet was preparing he summoned the three to ascertain how they had prospered in their trading. The first and second told him proudly how they had doubled their trusts, and he heartily applauded both alike. One indeed presented him with £2,000 the other with only £800; but they had displayed equal devotion, and they received the selfsame commendation (cf. vers. 21, 23 R.V.). "Well done!" he cried, bidding them as honoured guests to the feast of his home-coming; "enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The third was standing by and heard it all; and realising what a foolish game he had played, he attempted to brazen it out. "There," said he, producing his solitary talent, "thou hast thine own." He posed as an honest though injured man; but the master sternly told him that his neglect of his trust was tantamount to robbery. His acceptance thereof bound him to its discharge. If one undertakes an office and finds that he has either no heart or no capacity for it, he should resign it to another who will efficiently perform it. "Show yourselves approved bankers" is the most frequently and perhaps most surely attested of all our Lord's "unwritten

sayings " ; and it defines the duty of that unprofitable servant. If he would not himself trade with the talent, he should have deposited it at the bank, and then it would have been restored to the master with interest. There was no place for him at the banquet that evening. He was expelled from the house and cast upon the bleak world. And as for his neglected talent it was entrusted to the first of the three, who had proved himself so trustworthy and so competent.

Observe the principle which our Lord here enunciates. The faithful servants were alike commended, but they were requited not merely according to their faithfulness and diligence but according to their ability. *La carrière ouverte aux talents* was Napoleon's maxim, " Tools to him who can handle them." It is the law also of God's providence, and in truth it is no less merciful than just. For it were cruel to lay on a man a responsibility which he is unfit to bear. And if one be discontented with his appointed task because it is humble, he should consider (1) that a little place creditably occupied is better than a larger where one would be put to shame, and (2) that faithfulness in a little place is the pathway to promotion. " Unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." As a wise Rabbi put it, " the reward of one duty is another." The reward of good service is ability and opportunity for more.

6. *THE JUDGMENT OF THE HEATHEN*

XXV. 31–46

31 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory :*

32 *And before him shall be gathered all nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats :*

33 *And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

34 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :*

35 *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in :*

36 *Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

37 *Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ?*

38 *When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ?*

39 *Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ?*

40 *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

41 *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels :*

42 *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink :*

43 *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.*

44 *Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*

45 *Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

46 *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*

THERE is a surprise in this picture of the Last Judgment, an apparent inconsistency with our Lord's teaching elsewhere and indeed with the constant testimony of the New Testament Scriptures, where the test of discipleship is defined as faith in Him, meaning, be it observed, not mere acquiescence in a creed but a personal trust in the Living Saviour and a personal surrender to His grace. Everywhere else this is explicitly affirmed, but here our Lord seems to enunciate quite another test. He says nothing of faith or believing in His name. The sole criterion is kindness to one's fellow creatures and sympathy with their sorrows and sufferings.

The difficulty disappears when due account is taken of our Lord's plain and precise definition of His purpose here. "Before Him," it is written, "shall be gathered" not "all nations" but "all the nations" (R.V.). It is a quotation from the Book of Joel (iii. 2, 11, 12 R.V.), where the prophet describes the judgment of "the nations" in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. In Old Testament phraseology "the nations" signified the heathen; and the prophet expressly distinguishes them from Israel, the Lord's "people," His "heritage" (cf. Ps. lxvii. 1, 2). Hence what is here portrayed is the judgment of the heathen, all who have never known the Saviour, never heard His Gospel, never had an opportunity of believing in His name—these and these only; and in painting this magnificent and moving picture our Lord was answering a question which His previous discourse on the doom of neglected opportunities must have raised in the minds of His disciples.

What then will be the criterion for the heathen at the Last Assize? They will not be condemned for not believing in a Saviour of whom they have never heard. Their destiny will be determined, as St. Paul also affirms (cf. Rom. i. 18–21), by their use of the opportunities they had—the knowledge they possessed, the light they enjoyed. They did not know the Saviour, and they could not honour Him; but they knew their fellow creatures, and if they rendered to them the common duties of affection and compassion, that will suffice. Nor does our Lord leave it there. He declares that those men, those "righteous" heathen, are His unconscious disciples. In succouring their suffering fellows they have unwittingly honoured Him. For all sufferers are dear to Him; and since love is a vicarious principle, their sufferings are His and whatever is done to them is done to Him (cf. vers. 40, 45).

Still wheresoever pity shares
  Its bread with sorrow, want, and sin,
And love the beggar's feast prepares,
  The Uninvited Guest comes in.

Unheard, because our ears are dull,
  Unseen, because our eyes are dim,
He walks our earth, The Wonderful,
  And all good deeds are done to Him.

And let us not forget that this principle has a bearing not on the heathen alone but on ourselves, testing our professions of faith in Christ. For has not St. John in his first Epistle affirmed with unwearied reiteration that it is only as one loves his brother whom he hath seen that he truly loves God whom he hath not seen? God is Love; and he, and only he, who dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God.

Such is our Lord's teaching on the destiny of the heathen; and our hearts leap up in glad recognition of its justice and loving-kindness. Nor should it be ignored that, though He pronounces so terribly on the doom of the unrighteous, even here there is a note of gracious compassion. He bids the righteous "inherit the Kingdom *prepared for them* from the foundation of the world"; and while He bids the unrighteous

" depart into the eternal fire " (cf. v. 22), He adds that this awful portion is not the heritage which God had designed for them : it was prepared not for them but for " the Devil and his angels." God's purpose for every soul which He has created and loved is a place in His Eternal Kingdom ; and it is not His will that any should be excluded. It is a frustration of His desire.

RESOLUTION OF THE RULERS TO PUT HIM TO DEATH

xxvi. 1–5

1 *And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,*

2 *Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.*

3 *Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,*

4 *And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.*

5 *But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.*

IT was the night of Wednesday in the Holy Week when our Lord thus discoursed to the Twelve on Mount Olivet; and ere they lay down to rest He forewarned them of the course of events: "After two days (that is, according to the inclusive reckoning of the ancients, "next day but one") the Passover is celebrated and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." He did not speak without sure knowledge, and the Evangelist proceeds to show what was in His mind. His indictment of the rulers that afternoon in the Temple-court had exasperated them, and on retiring from the scene of their humiliation they had held a consultation. It was not a regular meeting of the Sanhedrin. For, eager to be avenged on Him, they did not stay to convene the august court in the council chamber, "the Hall of Hewn Stone" (*lishkath haggazith*), adjoining the Temple-court. Moreover, they had a malign purpose, and they eschewed publicity. And so they repaired to the residence of the Chief Priest, and since there was no

room within doors for so large an assemblage, they conferred in the central "court" or piazza (cf. R.V.). Already they had decreed His death (cf. Jo. xi. 47–53, 57), and the question now was how they might execute the sentence. They would fain have arrested Him forthwith, but they durst not; for He was the popular hero, and His arrest would have excited a riot in the crowded city. They must stay their hands "during the Feast" (cf. R.V.) and wait until the throng of worshippers had dispersed.

THE BANQUET AT BETHANY

xxvi. 6–13

6 *Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,*

7 *There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.*

8 *But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?*

9 *For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.*

10 *When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.*

11 *For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.*

12 *For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.*

13 *Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*

HERE St. Matthew and St. Mark (cf. xiv. 3–9) interrupt the narrative by introducing an incident which, as St. John explicitly affirms (cf. xii. 1), had happened not two but "six days before the Passover," that is, according to the ancient reckoning, on the Sunday previous. Reserving our study of the story until we reach St. John's full version, let us meanwhile consider the reason of its position here. After spending the Sabbath at Jericho in the house of Zacchæus our Lord continued His journey to Jerusalem. He did not, however, enter the city that day, but stopped at the village of Bethany where some six weeks previously He had wrought

that greatest of His miracles, the raising of Lazarus ; and there in token of reverence and gratitude He was publicly entertained. The banquet was held in the house of Simon the Leper, presumably one of the principal men of the village. He was not then a leper, else he would have been living apart in his uncleanness (cf. viii. 2–4) ; and doubtless he owed his healing to our Lord. It was the custom at an ancient feast to pour cool ointment on the head of an honoured guest (cf. Ps. xxiii. 5 ; Eccl. ix. 8), and in the course of the entertainment a woman—none other, St. John tells us (cf. xii. 3), than Mary the sister of Lazarus—entered and wrought this office on the dear Master with lavish devotion. Her ointment in an alabaster cruse was worth " more than three hundred pence " (cf. Mk. xiv. 5 ; Jo. xii. 5) or rather *denarii*. A *denarius* was a day's wage (cf. xx. 2) ; and thus, since there were three hundred working days in a year, Mary's offering cost a whole year's earnings.

It seemed sheer prodigality. " The disciples," says the Evangelist, meaning not merely the Twelve but the whole company, since they were all disciples, " had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste—this loss ? " and St. John tells us that it was Judas who voiced the protest. " Why trouble ye the woman ? " remonstrated the Master, using a colloquialism (cf. Lk. xi. 7, xviii. 5 ; Gal. vi. 17) : " Why are ye annoying her " or " bothering her ? It is " not " a good " but " a beautiful work that she hath wrought on Me." He recognised in it a significance which Mary at the moment did not intend. She was unaware of the impending tragedy ; but He knew and He interpreted her offering in the light thereof. It was a farewell gift, a last tribute of affection. And it was more. It was the Jewish custom to embalm the dead with aromatic spices (cf. Jo. xix. 39, 40), and He saw in Mary's " beautiful work " an anticipation of that last office of reverence. " In that she cast this ointment upon My body she did it for My embalming " (the same word which occurs in the Greek Version of Gen. l. 2). It gladdened His heart, and He promised her a large recompense —the admiration of believers in all succeeding ages. As the spices preserved the body from decay, even so would her devotion preserve her memory.

THE TRAITOR'S BARGAIN

xxvi. 14–16

14 *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,*

15 *And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.*

16 *And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.*

HERE we perceive the Evangelist's reason for introducing in this connection the story of the banquet at Bethany. He transferred it hither in explanation of the monstrous and truly incredible treason which he has now to relate. Like the rest of the Twelve Judas entertained the prevalent ideal of the Messiah as a King of David's lineage, and he had expected that the Master would lay aside His lowly guise and take His throne and reward His disciples with high honour and rich emolument. It was this golden prospect which had induced him to leave all and follow Him; but as time passed and it became ever clearer that the Master's goal was not a throne but a cross, he had realised with bitter chagrin that his hope had been belied. He had embarked on a fool's enterprise, and he would retrieve his blunder as best he might. He was the treasurer of the Apostle-company, and St. John tells us (cf. xii. 6 R.V.) that by way of indemnifying himself he was wont to pilfer from the common purse. Hence his resentment of Mary's "waste"; and the Master's rebuke had rankled in his mind these four days. He had determined to abandon what seemed to him a desperate cause as profitably as he might, and he saw his opportunity that afternoon when the rulers, discomfited and wrathful, retreated from the Temple-court. He tracked them to the Chief Priest's residence and, obtaining

admittance, stated his errand. If they would make it worth his while, he would, not "deliver," but "betray" Him unto them.

They joyfully welcomed his overture (cf. Mk. xiv. 11; Lk. xxii. 5) as enabling them to take immediate action. At the same time they felt the infamy of the transaction, and they evinced their contempt of the traitor by offering him "thirty pieces of silver" or shekels. What this means appears when we understand that "thirty shekels of silver" was, according to the ancient Law (cf. Ex. xxi. 32), the valuation of a slave. It was not our Lord that they thus valued but Judas; and for this base price he sold his honour. Fain to be rid of him, they paid it on the spot. "They weighed unto him," says the Evangelist (R.V.), "thirty pieces of silver," after the eastern manner (cf. Gen. xliii. 21). "To this day it is usual in Jerusalem to examine and test carefully all coins received. Thus a *medjidie* (silver) is not only examined by the eye, but also by noticing its ring on the stone pavement, and English sterling gold is carefully weighed, and returned when defaced."

THE LAST SUPPER

xxvi. 17–29

17 *Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?*

18 *And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.*

19 *And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.*

20 *Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.*

21 *And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

22 *And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?*

23 *And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.*

24 *The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.*

25 *Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.*

26 *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and *blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*

27 *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*

28 *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

* Many Greek copies have, *gave thanks.*

29 *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

THE morrow (Thursday) was devoted to the business of getting the Supper ready, particularly the offering of the paschal lamb (cf. Mk. xiv. 12; Lk. xxii. 7) and the roasting of its flesh, and the baking of the unleavened cakes, whence it was called "the first day of unleavened bread." Like every other Christian ordinance the Lord's Supper was no novel institution. It was the ancient Feast of the Passover with a new meaning. The Passover was the commemoration of that historic deliverance, the Exodus from Egypt (cf. Ex. xii). On that memorable night when the Lord would redeem His enslaved people, they were instructed to hold themselves in readiness. Each family prepared their supper. They slew a lamb and sprinkled its blood upon their door-posts for a token to the destroying angel, and roasted its flesh and ate it with unleavened bread, since there was no time for the ordinary process of baking, and with bitter herbs in remembrance of the bitterness of their bondage. It was on the fourteenth of the month Abib or, as it was called in later days, Nisan, and on that day year after year, generation after generation, their descendants assembled in Jerusalem and kept the Feast, not in the Temple but in their dwellings; for it was a family meal, and not a priest but the master of the house presided.

Our Lord had come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and to die, the true Paschal Lamb. He had no dwelling there. He lodged with the Twelve in the Garden of Gethsemane, and when they awoke that morning, they inquired where He would eat the Supper in the evening, that they might go and make it ready. Already He had arranged it all, and the reason of His reticence appears in the fuller narratives of St. Mark (cf. xiv. 12–16) and St. Luke (cf. xxii. 7–13). A friend in the city had provided a room in his house; and thither He now directs two of them, Peter and John (cf. Mk. xiv. 13; Lk. xxii. 8). In the evening He and the others joined them there. They all took their places at the table, and presently ere addressing

Himself to the business which He had in view—the institution of His sacramental memorial—He horrified the faithful eleven and startled the guilty traitor by announcing that one of them would betray Him and enlarging on the enormity of the crime. "One of you shall betray Me—one that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish": there lay its enormity. For on the Oriental view the sharing of food established a covenant which it were extreme impiety to break—"the covenant of salt," as it was called (cf. Lev. ii. 13; Num. xviii. 19; 2 Chr. xiii. 5). Hence it was that Joshua durst not slay the crafty Gibeonites after taking of their victuals and so making a league with them (cf. Josh. ix); and it is told of Zaid al-Khail, an Arab warrior in the time of Mohammed, that once, when his camels were stolen, he pursued after the marauder and would have slain him, but on learning that ere carrying them off he had drunk from his father's milk-bowl he stayed his hand. Here lay the villainy of Judas, who even while he reclined with the Master at the holy table and took the bread and wine from His hand, was "seeking opportunity to betray Him."

Wherefore should our Lord have chosen that season of holy communion for so terrible an announcement? (1) He would fortify the hearts of His faithful disciples for the impending ordeal; and this He did when He said "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him," reminding them of the Sovereign Purpose which continually overrules the wickedness of men to the accomplishment of high and gracious ends. His betrayal was indeed a fearful crime—"good were it for that man if he had not been born"; yet it was ordained that He should die, a sacrifice for the sin of the world, and the wrath of His enemies was bringing the counsel of God to pass. And (2) He would not institute His sacramental memorial in the traitor's presence. A direct accusation would have raised a storm of indignation; and St. John (cf. xiii. 21–30) shows how He constrained Judas to take his departure without an exposure of his guilt.

And now He institutes His Sacrament, "the Communion of His Body and Blood." First He took a cake of unleavened bread, and blessed it and broke it and distributed the fragments.

And then He took, not "the cup," but "a cup." Each had his drinking cup, and here the Master fills His own cup from the bowl and, passing round the latter, bids His disciples fill their cups too. "Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the Covenant" (R.V.) or, according to some authorities, "the New Covenant"—the sacrificial blood which, according to the ancient ritual (cf. Ex. xxiv. 8), ratified the new covenant "for the remission of sins" whereof the prophet had spoken (cf. Jer. xxxi. 31–34).

Thus He transfigured the ancient Feast and ordained a gracious memorial for the comfort and refreshment of His disciples in succeeding ages; and its significance, so darkened by mediæval superstition and perverted by unhallowed disputation, is excellently expressed by an old and forgotten definition. Whatever its origin, it appears in the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), that noblest of the teachers of undivided Christendom, and it was adopted and elaborated by William Ames—better known by his Latinised name Amesius—that saintly and profound theologian of English Puritanism, in his too much neglected work, *Theologiæ Medulla*. "The Sacrament," says the former, "is a sign commemorative of the Passion of Christ, demonstrative of divine grace, and prophetic of future glory." That is to say, it has a threefold aspect. (1) It is a commemoration, according to the Lord's own word (cf. Lk. xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25): "This do in remembrance of Me." It is retrospective. It turns our thoughts back to the Incarnation, and sets before our eyes the Saviour who came from His glory and revealed the heart of the Unseen Father and crowned His life of love with a sacrificial death. But (2) it is more. He is no mere historic personage who lived and died long ago. He is the Living Lord, the Eternal Saviour; and therefore the Sacrament is "demonstrative of divine grace." It lifts our hearts to One who is "the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever," and opens them to the grace of His Holy Spirit who came when He went away to continue unseen His blessed ministry. And here lies the vital truth of the mediæval dogma of the Real Presence. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ; He takes of the things of Christ and shows

them unto us ; He leads us into the truth. And it is His ministry that makes the Sacrament efficacious. Nor (3) is this all. The Sacrament is "prophetic of future glory." Here is the significance of that saying of the Master, so moving yet so little appreciated : "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom." It was the last time He would ever sit with them at an earthly table ; but there was a better feast in store—the Heavenly Banquet, "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb," whereof the Holy Supper is a foreshadowing. And this is the crowning truth. The Sacrament has a forward look. It is a prophecy of the final home-gathering when we shall meet in the Father's House and see each other's faces and clasp each other's hands in a glad and eternal reunion.

Here then is the full significance of the Holy Communion. It is more than a memorial, a commemoration of a far-off event, as Zwingli and his disciples viewed it despite the protests of Calvin and Knox. It is a channel of present grace, an immediate converse with the Living Saviour, as the Romanists recognised and crudely expressed in their theory of Transubstantiation and their dogma of the Real Presence, oblivious of the Holy Spirit's ministry. And it is moreover, as neither Romanists nor Reformers perceived, thus missing its supreme consolation, a foreshadowing of future glory. It links past, present, and future. It tells of a Saviour who not only shed His precious blood for the world's sin long ago but lives evermore, our present Help, our eternal Heritage. And thus all the Persons of the Blessed Trinity are involved in the gracious ordinance. It is, in the beautiful phrase of the mediæval saints, our *viaticum*, the provision for our pilgrimage to the City of God. The Cross is our starting-point, and we keep ever turning back in believing remembrance to that blessed trysting place ; the Holy Spirit is our Comrade and Helper on the road ; and the Father's House is our destination, our Eternal Home.

FOREWARNING OF DESERTION AND DENIAL

xxvi. 30–35

30 *And when they had sung an *hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

31 *Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.*

32 *But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.*

33 *Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*

34 *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.*

35 *Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.*

SINCE it was at midnight that the destroying angel had passed through the land of Egypt (cf. Ex. xi. 4, xii. 29), it was inferred that the Messiah would come at midnight; and therefore the Paschal Supper was continued until midnight that, should He appear, the company might be ready to bid Him welcome. It was hardly midnight yet, but it was time to disperse lest the traitor and his company should appear on the scene (cf. Jo. xiv. 31); and ere they took their departure our Lord and the eleven joined in a "hymn," a song of praise. What was it that they sang? The usage was that early in the course of the Supper the company should sing Pss. cxiii, cxiv—the first *Hallel* ("Praise"), and at the close Pss. cxv–cxviii—the second *Hallel*; and this is the hymn which He and they now sang.

* Or, *psalm.*

> God is the Lord, who unto us hath made light to arise:
> Bind ye unto the altar's horns with cords the sacrifice.
> Thou art my God, I'll Thee exalt; my God, I will Thee praise.
> Give thanks to God, for He is good: His mercy lasts always.

With these words on His lips the Lamb of God went forth to die.

According to St. John these two announcements—His desertion by the eleven and His denial by Peter—which St. Matthew and St. Mark (xiv. 27–31) in their briefer narratives have linked together, were made separately by our Lord, the latter in the course of the Supper (Jo. xiii. 36–38; cf. Lk. xxii. 31–34) and the former after the departure from the Upper Room (Jo. xiv. 31, xvi. 31–33). And surely it so happened. When they left the Upper Room, He had done with upbraiding, and thereafter, as St. John shows, He spoke nothing but words of tenderness and good cheer. And that was the fitting place for the announcement of His desertion. For in truth no kinder words ever fell from His lips. It was the Good Shepherd that spoke them, and His grief was not for Himself but for His feeble flock affrighted, in the language of the prophet (cf. Zech. xiii. 7), by the smiting of their shepherd and scattered abroad. And He reassured them with a promise which, little as they understood it at the moment, would cheer their hearts—that, even as it came to pass (cf. Jo. xxi), He would meet them again in Galilee, that dear homeland of happy memories.

And what of His announcement of Peter's denial, made early, as we have seen, in the course of the Supper ere the institution of the Sacrament? Here, as in every stern word He ever spoke, our Lord had a gracious purpose—not merely that He might rebuke Peter's self-confidence and perhaps by warning him save him from the disaster but that afterwards in his humiliation the recreant might be delivered from despair by the remembrance that the Master had foreknown his weakness, and yet had loved him and admitted him to the fellowship of His blessed Sacrament. Observe here a seeming disagreement in the evangelic narratives. They all represent our Lord as predicting a threefold denial (cf. Mk. xiv. 30; Lk. xxii. 34; Jo. xiii. 38), but the denials which they subsequently record are diverse

and all reckoned number more than three. Thus, according to St. John (xviii. 15–19, 25–27) Peter denied Him (1) to the portress at the gate of the Chief Priest's palace, (2) to the company about the fire in the courtyard, especially (3) the kinsman of Malchus. According to St. Matthew (xxvi. 69–75) and St. Mark (xiv. 66–72), he denied Him (1) to a maidservant who saw him by the fire in the courtyard and charged him with being one of the prisoner's disciples, (2) to another maidservant at the gateway on his retreating thither in confusion—probably the portress renewing her charge, and (3) to a man in the courtyard who recognised him as a Galilean by his accent; while St. Luke (xxii. 54–62) omits the second of those three and substitutes a rencontre with a man in the courtyard, evidently the same which St. John mentions. The explanation is that in ancient days as in our own "thrice" was used not only in the precise sense of "three times" but vaguely in the sense of "repeatedly," "again and again," "over and over." Thus we find in Greek and Latin "thrice holy," "thrice happy," "thrice miserable"; and Shakespeare has "thrice welcome," "thrice fair," "thrice puissant," "thrice worse than Judas," "thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just." When St. Paul says (2 Cor. xii. 8) that he "thrice besought the Lord" for the removal of his "thorn in the flesh," he does not mean that he prayed just three times but that he prayed over and over, "twice and again," "again and yet again." And even so meant our Lord when He predicted that Peter would "deny Him thrice."

GETHSEMANE

xxvi. 36–46

36 *Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.*

37 *And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.*

38 *Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.*

39 *And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

40 *And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?*

41 *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

42 *He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.*

43 *And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.*

44 *And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.*

45 *Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

46 *Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.*

THEIR destination was their wonted retreat (cf. exposition of xxi. 17–22) on Mount Olivet—that "place" or more properly "enclosed piece of ground" (R.V.), in old English "close," the olive orchard called Gethsemane. The weary disciples would have lain down to take their accustomed rest, but for the Master there was no rest that night. The dread ordeal was nigh, and His flesh shrank from the cruel anguish. He had another and more urgent need than rest. It was a twofold need—divine reinforcement for the bitter conflict and the hardly less precious succour of human sympathy. He would find the former in communion with His Father; and for the latter He turned to His three best beloved and most understanding disciples, Peter, James, and John. The others might sleep if they would, but He had need of the three, and He took them with Him apart. Alone with them He freely unburdened His heart. "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy" or, as St. Mark has it (xiv. 33), "sore amazed and very heavy." Observe that phrase "very heavy." It is the time-honoured rendering which King James's translators took over from Wycliffe; and when the Revisers discard the archaic phrase and substitute "sore troubled," and others, enamoured of modernity, would have us read "full of distress," "deeply distressed," "agitated," and the like, they merely provoke scholars to impatience and set plain folk wondering what the Evangelists really meant.

And the question is well worth considering. The Greek word thus variously and vaguely interpreted is an etymological puzzle. It was explained by the old Greek lexicographers as signifying properly "away from one's own people"; and whether their theory be scientifically tenable or no, it has at least this merit that it catches the idea which the word conveys in the few instances where it occurs in Greek literature. It is used, for example, by an ancient philosopher of the bewilderment of the soul when it quits the body and, banished from its mortal tenement, finds itself, "pallid, naked, shivering," in an environment so novel and unaccustomed. And it occurs again in an Egyptian papyrus-letter where a man writing home mentions his foster-child. "We are very heavy for her"

he says. But there lies nearer to our hands another and still more illuminating example. The word occurs in the New Testament only here and in one other passage (Phil. ii. 26). And what is the story which we find there? The Apostle was a prisoner at Rome, and tidings of his plight had reached his friends at Philippi. They made haste and despatched one of their number, the good Epaphroditus, with a message of sympathy. He stayed with the captive a while, tending him and preaching in the city until he was stricken with the malaria so prevalent at Rome in the sultry autumn; and during his long illness he yearned for home, and his yearning became intolerable when he received a letter of anxious inquiry from his friends. "He longed after you all," writes the Apostle, "and was *full of heaviness*, because ye had heard that he had been sick." There is the definition of the word. "He was longing after you all, and was *homesick* because ye had heard of his illness." And this is its meaning here. Hitherto in His compassion for His disciples in their impending desolation He had forgotten His own far sorer grief; but now it thrusts itself upon Him, and His frail humanity shudders at the grim ordeal. "He began to be sorrowful, and to be homesick." O to be gone from that scene of anguish and be back in the Father's House!

> It's hame, and it's hame, hame fain wad I be,
> An' it's hame, hame, hame, to my ain countree!

The grief of His o'erfraught heart would not be controlled, but He would not give way in presence of the three, lest He should unman them. "Abide ye here," He said, "and watch" or rather "wake with Me"; and He withdrew a little, "about a stone's cast" (Lk. xxii. 41), and there flung Himself on the ground and "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death" (Heb. v. 7), entreating that, if it were possible, He might be spared the drinking of the bitter cup. For an hour He lay and entreated thus, and in God's silence He recognised His answer. "Not as I will," said He, "but as Thou wilt"; and thus mastering His weakness He arose and returned to

the three. Alas ! they were sleeping ; and, especially addressing Peter who had so lately asseverated his devotion, " What," said He, " could ye not watch—had ye not the strength to wake with Me a single hour ? " Surely it became them to be seeking strength for the trial which awaited them. " Wake," He said, " and pray that ye enter not into temptation." But hardly had the reproach passed His lips when pity overcame Him and He made generous allowance for them : " The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Human sympathy had failed Him and He turned again to God, leaving them and resuming His supplication. His second prayer was no longer an appeal for deliverance but a submission to the Father's will. This brought Him peace, and presently He returned to the disciples. Again He found them asleep, and without remonstrance He left them and sought once more the sympathy which never fails, renewing His submission to the Father's will.

Thus employed He heard the approaching tramp of armed men and saw through the trees the gleam of torches and the flash of armour. The time for prayer was past, and He hastened to His disciples. It is not written that they were now asleep. Probably they were awake, but it no longer mattered. They had lost their opportunity. It was now too late for sympathy. " Sleep on now," said He with mournful irony, " and take your rest : behold, the hour is at hand." They might sleep now if they would. Their sleeping would do Him no harm, their waking no good. It was the sorest reproach they had ever heard from the Master's lips, and the grief and shame of it would haunt them all their days.

THE ARREST

xxvi. 47–56

47 *And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.*

48 *Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.*

49 *And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.*

50 *And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.*

51 *And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.*

52 *Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.*

53 *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*

54 *But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?*

55 *In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.*

56 *But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.*

ON his withdrawal from the Upper Room Judas had betaken himself to the Chief Priest and reported that he had now the desired opportunity for betraying the Master (cf. ver. 16). Caiaphas had the officers of the Sanhedrin at his command (cf. Jo. vii. 32, 45–49), and in ordinary circumstances

these would have sufficed; but during the Passover Week, when the city was crowded with worshippers, the Roman governor resided there for the preservation of order, and an arrest required his sanction. Caiaphas had to report the case at the Castle and obtain a detachment of soldiers (cf. Jo. xviii. 3), and ere the train was laid the Lord and the Eleven had left the Upper Room. Judas, however, knew whither they had betaken themselves (cf. Jo. xviii. 2), and he led the way to Gethsemane. It was a large troop, and though the soldiers marched in order, their civilian attendants gave it a look of a "multitude" or rather "rabble." The traitor had fancied that, when they reached the place, his business would be done and he might steal away unnoticed; but a difficulty arose. Here were twelve men, and which of them should the soldiers arrest? The captain appealed to their guide, and the wretched traitor had to show himself. Thinking still to hide his villainy from his fellow disciples by making as though he had just returned from the secret office on which the Master had sent him (cf. Jo. xiii. 27–29), he gave the soldiers a signal: "Whomsoever I shall kiss"—the customary greeting of kinsfolk and loving friends (cf. Gen. xxxi. 55, xlv. 14, 15; Lk. xv. 20; Ac. xx. 37). Stepping forward he kissed the Master, and not merely kissed Him but "kissed Him fondly"—the word which St. Luke (cf. vii. 38, 45) uses of the kisses which the penitent in Simon the Pharisee's house imprinted on her Saviour's feet. It was an attempt to play out to the last his double part, and the Master indignantly repelled it. The sting of His words is lost in our Version. "Comrade!" said He, "to thine errand."

The arrest was not effected without a struggle. The Lord, recognising the Father's will in His enemies' action, would have yielded submissively; but the disciples lacked this assurance, and Peter, so generous despite his vacillation, was nerved to desperate resistance. He and another, perhaps John, when they saw the storm gathering, had provided themselves with swords (cf. Lk. xxii. 38); and when he beheld the dear Master in His enemies' grasp, he drew his sword and sprang to His aid and, falling upon Malchus, the Chief Priest's servant (cf. Jo. xviii. 10, 11), slashed his ear. It is surprising that the

wild deed should have gone unavenged, and the explanation is that, as St. Luke tells (cf. xxii. 51), the Lord healed the wound and thus stayed the soldiers' anger. Then He calmed His disciples by a remonstrance which not only breathes a spirit of calm heroism but reveals the source of His strength and courage. First He reminds them that the sword was no weapon for them, since "violence belongeth not to God" and it is by suffering that the Kingdom of Heaven prevails. He was not indeed helpless in His enemies' hands. The hosts of Heaven were at His call. Long ago a single angel had smitten the army of Sennacherib, 185,000 men (2 Ki. xix. 35); and He need but appeal to His Father and more than twelve legions (72,000) of angels would speed to His succour. But that was not His Father's will. He must die according to the Scriptures, and by His death win life for the world. And therewith He turned to His captors, especially the officers of the Sanhedrin, and addressed them with proud scorn. What were they but cowards, coming thus against Him in such force as though He were an armed desperado? Why had they never arrested Him when He was teaching in the Temple-court? It was cowardice that had stayed their hands, the dread of a popular insurrection. Evidently the taunt provoked them, and they threatened violence. At all events the disciples at this point were stricken with panic and took to flight, leaving Him to His fate.

THE TRIAL

1. *BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN*

xxvi. 57–68

57 *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.*

58 *But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.*

59 *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;*

60 *But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,*

61 *And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.*

62 *And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?*

63 *But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.*

64 *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

65 *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.*

66 *What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.*

67 *Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with *the palms of their hands,*

68 *Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?*

* Or, *rods.*

IT would appear from the narratives of St. Matthew and the other Synoptists (cf. Mk. xiv. 53 ; Lk. xxii. 54) that our Lord was conducted immediately from Gethsemane to His trial before the Sanhedrin under the presidency of the Chief Priest Caiaphas ; but here a difficulty emerges, inasmuch as it was the dead of night when He was arrested, and the Sanhedrin could not constitutionally meet ere the hour of morning sacrifice, about 3 a.m., when from the watch-tower of the Temple the first flush of dawn was seen on Mount Hebron. Here once more the situation is defined by St. John's fuller narrative (cf. xviii. 13–27), which shows that He was conducted from Gethsemane to Caiaphas' father-in-law Annas, the Chief Priest *emeritus* (cf. xxi. 23), who resided hard by in a mansion on the slope of Mount Olivet, and there was subjected by the astute veteran to a preliminary examination with the design of clearing the case and expediting the formal procedure in the court of the Sanhedrin. It is the story of the trial before the Sanhedrin that St. Matthew here tells, but he weaves into it the story of Peter's denial in the courtyard of Annas' residence ; and it was thither that not only Peter but John also (cf. Jo. xviii. 15), rallying from their panic in Gethsemane, followed their captive Master afar off.

The Sanhedrin was the supreme Jewish court, and had it been free as of old, it would easily have compassed our Lord's death ; but now that the Jews were vassals of Rome, its capital sentences had to be referred to the Roman governor for revision and ratification (cf. Jo. xviii. 31). Hence it was necessary not merely that our Lord should be sentenced to death but that He should be sentenced on grounds which would stand the scrutiny of an impartial tribunal ; and Caiaphas and his colleagues set about the framing of a valid indictment. First they sought to procure evidence, and they had no lack of unscrupulous witnesses ; but nothing reasonable was alleged until two came forward with a distorted version of something which He had said three years previously at the beginning of His ministry, referring to His death and resurrection (cf. Jo. ii. 19). Quite honestly, no doubt, they had taken Him to mean the destruction of—not "the Temple" but—"the Sanctuary,"

the sacred shrine in the inner court of the Temple. It looked like a threat of revolutionary violence, and that would have been a serious offence in Roman eyes. However, on examination the witnesses contradicted themselves and invalidated their evidence (cf. Mk. xiv. 59).

All the while He stood disdainfully silent, and it seemed as though the case would break down for lack of evidence. If He would only speak, He might incriminate Himself, and Caiaphas called upon Him to answer the charges. Still He kept silence, and Caiaphas, determined that his prey should not elude his grasp, challenged Him to affirm on His solemn oath whether He were the Messiah. Silence was no longer possible, since it would have been construed as a disavowal of His divine commission. " Thou hast said it " was our Lord's reply—a formula of assent (cf. Mk. xiv. 62). And He went farther. He was standing there in seeming helplessness, but one day the situation would be reversed : He would be seated on His throne, and His enemies would be arraigned before Him.

Caiaphas had gained his end. What was this but blasphemy? And blasphemy was a capital offence. After the fashion of a Jew when blasphemy was spoken in his hearing, Caiaphas with an affectation of horror rent his mantle and called upon the court to pronounce judgment. Forthwith our Lord was acclaimed guilty and sentenced to death. The procedure was flagrantly unconstitutional. The Jewish law, studiously and even meticulously merciful, ordained (1) that a capital sentence should never be pronounced in haste but postponed until the day following, and (2) that after it was pronounced the Sanhedrin should mourn and fast for the remainder of the day. Not only, however, was our Lord sentenced out of hand but His judges, those venerable custodians of law and religion, compassed Him in unholy glee with insult, violence, and mockery. It was not indeed themselves that did it but, as St. Luke shows (cf. xxii. 63), their officers with their approval. They spat on His face (cf. Is. l. 6) ; they buffeted Him with their hands and smote Him with their rods ; and, blindfolding Him (cf. Lk. xxii. 64), they bade Him " divine who had smitten Him."

(1) Peter's Denial

xxvi. 69–75

69 *Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.*

70 *But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.*

71 *And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.*

72 *And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.*

73 *And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.*

74 *Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.*

75 *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.*

NOW we turn back to the scene—not "in the palace" but—"in the courtyard" of Annas, the Chief Priest *emeritus*, whither Peter and John had followed their captive Master, and where, amid the idle throng of soldiers and officers and servants, they were awaiting the issue of His precognition within doors. Observe here an incidental corroboration of St. John's representation of Peter's denial as happening then and not at the formal trial before the Sanhedrin in its judgment-hall within the precincts of the Temple. The ceremonial law prohibited the keeping of poultry within the city, forasmuch their routing in refuse made them unclean; and it was the crowing of a cock that recalled Peter to his senses. It was the dead of night, and since the air was chill in the open courtyard,

they had kindled a fire; and he joined the group about it. As he stood warming himself with an assumption of nonchalance, a maidservant remarked him as a follower of the prisoner, and he denied it and, skulking off, took refuge in the porch of the gateway. There he encountered another maid—probably the portress who had challenged him on entering (cf. Jo. xviii. 17)—and, observing his confusion, she mischievously called the attention of the bystanders to him: "This fellow was also with Jesus the Nazarene." He swore that he was not, and they closed about him and, after the fashion of idlers, joined in the sport of baiting him. A Galilean was recognisable in Jerusalem by his strong burr, and hearing his northern accent they insisted that he was certainly a follower of the Galilean. Wild with terror, he lost all self-control and with a curse and an oath cried "I know not the fellow!" reverting instinctively to the manners of a rough fisherman. Old habits die hard. Just then from a steading hard by on the mountainside there rang out the crowing of a cock. It reminded him of the Master's warning (cf. ver. 34), and he rushed out of the courtyard into the darkness and wept bitterly.

(2) The Traitor's Despair

xxvii. 1–10

1 *When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:*

2 *And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.*

3 *Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,*

4 *Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.*

5 *And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

6 *And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.*

7 *And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.*

8 *Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.*

9 *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, *whom they of the children of Israel did value;*

10 *And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.*

IT was not without design that the Evangelist delayed the telling of the story of Peter's disloyalty and his bitter but salutary repentance; and what his design was appears now when he presents in dramatic contrast therewith the tragic issue of a more terrible disloyalty. After the Sanhedrin

* Or, *whom they bought of the children of Israel.*

had condemned our Lord, it remained that the sentence should be submitted to the Roman governor; and He was forthwith conducted by His guards to the governor's court. As the Sanhedrists were leaving the Hall of Hewn Stone on their way thither, they encountered a woeful figure. It was the traitor Judas. Truly, in the language of that other apostate, "that miserable mortal," Francis Spira, "man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?" It is only after a crime has been committed that its enormity is realised; and when the traitor saw the Master actually condemned to death, he was stricken with remorse, and he conceived the idea of even now cancelling the bargain which he had made with the Chief Priests (cf. xxvi. 14–16), that is, Caiaphas the acting Chief Priest and the Chief Priests *emeriti* (cf. xxi. 23). With his thirty shekels in his hand he waylaid them at the door of their council-chamber, and cried "I sinned in betraying innocent blood!" They spurned the wretch, disowning responsibility; but he pursued them across the Temple-court, and when, thinking thus to escape him, they retreated into the Sanctuary, he hurled the coins after them ere they could shut the door, and made off and hanged himself.

They gathered the scattered shekels, and afterwards at their leisure they deliberated what should be done therewith. Being the price of blood, the money was unclean (cf. Dt. xxiii. 18), but they found a use for it. Outside the city, where the smoke of the kiln would cause no annoyance (cf. 1 Chr. iv. 23), lay a potter's clay-pit, now disused, worthless and unsightly; and this they purchased with the accursed shekels, and converted it into a burial-place for strangers, "Gentile dogs," who chanced to die in the Holy City. They deemed it a fitting use of the polluted money, unwitting that in bestowing on despised heathen the purchase of the Saviour's blood they were proclaiming the universality of His grace.

Ever careful to point out to his Jewish readers prophetic foreshadowings of the evangelic story, St. Matthew here quotes the ancient prophet's complaint of his people's ingratitude in requiting his pastoral ministry with a slave's price of thirty shekels. The passage occurs in the Book of Zechariah (xi. 12,

13), yet the Evangelist ascribes it to Jeremiah. It may be a mere slip, whether on his part or on that of an early copyist. "How Jeremiah's name crept in," says Calvin, "I confess I know not, nor does it sorely trouble me. That Jeremiah's name has certainly been put by an error for Zechariah the actual fact shows." But St. Jerome states that he had found the prophecy in an uncanonical writing of Jeremiah; and it is significant that the later chapters (ix–xiv) of our Book of Zechariah are recognised on critical grounds as a collection of anonymous prophecies of various dates. And thus it may well be that the quotation is actually, as St. Matthew has it, a prophecy of Jeremiah. It is seldom safe to charge the sacred writers with error.

2. *BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE*

xxvii. 11–26

11 *And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.*

12 *And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.*

13 *Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?*

14 *And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.*

15 *Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.*

16 *And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.*

17 *Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?*

18 *For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.*

19 *When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.*

20 *But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.*

21 *The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.*

22 *Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.*

23 *And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.*

24 *When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands*

before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye to it.

25 *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.*

26 *Then released he Barabbas unto them : and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

SINCE the death of King Herod the Great Judæa had been a Roman Province, and the Procurator who now governed it in the Emperor's name, was Pontius Pilate. It was the most difficult Province of the Empire ; for not only were the Jews a proud race, chafing under the foreign yoke, but their faith that they were God's chosen people made them contemptuous of the heathen and inspired them to wild fanaticism. It was hardly possible for a Roman governor, however prudent, to avoid offending their keen susceptibilities and exciting them to violent outbreaks. The Emperor and his Senate cared little what happened in the Provinces—what injustice or oppression was perpetrated—so long as order was maintained and tribute duly rendered ; but they dealt hardly with any governor who had trouble with his subjects. And Pilate had involved himself in serious embarrassment. He was a haughty Roman, and he had flouted the Jews and outraged their national and religious sentiments, thus provoking frequent insurrections. Already he had been reprimanded by the Emperor, and fresh trouble would ensure his recall and disgrace. He was at the mercy of his subjects. Whenever a dispute arose, they knew that they had only to threaten violence and he would yield their demands.

Such was the situation at this momentous crisis. The Roman capital of the Province was Cæsarea Stratonis, and there the Procurator had his official residence ; but he had, according to custom, come to Jerusalem for the Passover season to preserve order in the crowded city, and he was residing at the Prætorium (cf. ver. 27 R.V. marg.), the old palace of King Herod. Thither the Sanhedrists conducted our Lord, evincing in two ways their contempt for the unhappy governor. (1) Business began early in the East that it might be over ere the

heat of the day. Even at Rome the law-courts sat from 8 to 9 a.m., and clients waited on their patrons as early as 6 a.m. But it was still earlier when the Sanhedrists presented themselves at the Prætorium. For it was about 3 a.m. when their high court convened, and the hasty trial would hardly occupy an hour; and when our Lord's protracted trial before Pilate drew to a close, it was, says St. John (xix. 14), "about the sixth hour," that is, according to his reckoning (cf. exposition of Jo. i. 39), 6 a.m. It would thus at the latest be shortly after 4 a.m. when they presented themselves at the Prætorium and summoned Pilate from his couch to give them audience. And (2) since it was the Passover season, they would not defile themselves by entering a heathen abode (cf. Jo. xviii. 28, 29). They remained outside the gateway, and the governor, chafing under the indignity, had to repair thither and receive their indictment.

And what was the indictment? The Sanhedrin had found our Lord guilty of blasphemy; but since this was a charge whereof the Roman law took no account, they gave it a political turn and arraigned Him for treason inasmuch as He claimed to be "the King of the Jews" (cf. Lk. xxiii. 2). That was a charge which the Procurator durst not set aside, and he asked the prisoner if He acknowledged it: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" "Thou sayest it" assented our Lord (cf. xxvi. 64). Evidently He was about to explain what the claim meant, but the Sanhedrists clamorously interrupted Him, insisting that He had pleaded guilty and demanding His condemnation; and He held His peace. Here St. Matthew's report is much condensed, and what ensued is presented in the fuller narratives of St. Luke (xxiii. 1–23) and especially St. John (xviii. 28–40). Pilate had the prisoner conveyed into the Prætorium, and on examining Him there he was satisfied of His innocence. It was his plain duty to dismiss the case, but the Sanhedrists were bent on having their sentence ratified and he durst not thwart them. He made repeated attempts to evade the odious necessity, and it was then that our Lord in scorn of his cowardice treated him, as He treated the Sanhedrists at the outset, with silent disdain.

Sorely reluctant Pilate was about to pronounce sentence. Such was the Roman reverence for law that no judgment was accounted valid unless it were delivered from a tribunal ; and since trials had occasionally to be conducted informally, in theatres or by the wayside, a magistrate was provided with a portable tribunal. In this instance, when the accusers were mustered before the gateway of the Prætorium, the Procurator had his tribunal set on the pavement of the porch (cf. Jo. xix. 13), and he had just taken his seat upon it to pronounce sentence (cf. ver. 19) when a crowd of citizens, the rabble of Jerusalem, appeared on the scene (cf. Mk. xv. 8 R.V.). Who were they ? And what was their errand ? It was a custom, designed to gratify the populace, that at the Passover season the Roman governor should grant a free pardon according to the popular choice ; and the rascal multitude had now come to claim the annual privilege. An idea occurred to the perplexed Procurator. It happened that there was lying in prison a notorious criminal, a robber (cf. Jo. xviii. 40) or rather a "brigand," probably, since it is the same word in both cases (cf. Lk. x. 30), one of those desperadoes who infested the mountainous road between Jerusalem and Jericho. He had been taken red-handed in a recent insurrection (cf. Mk. xv. 7), and as a rebel against the Roman authority he would be somewhat of a hero with the Jewish rabble. He was commonly known as Barabbas, but this was not his name. It is, like Bartholomew (cf. Mt. x. 3) and Bartimæus, a patronymic, properly *Bar Abba*, "the son of the Father," that is, the Rabbi (cf. xxiii. 9)—a designation which expresses the popular wonderment that a good man's son should have fallen so low. According to several ancient testimonies, earlier than our oldest extant manuscript of the Gospel, including the text which Origen of Alexandria used at the beginning of the third century, his name was Jesus—a common Jewish name, being the Greek form of Joshua ; and here Pilate perceived a welcome opportunity. "Whom," said he to the petitioners, "will ye that I release unto you ? Jesus bar Abba or Jesus which is called Christ ? "

Certainly they would have chosen the latter ; for our Lord had deserved well of the people of Jerusalem. But just at

that moment came an interruption. A note was handed to Pilate. It was from his wife Claudia Procula, who, like many another noble lady at that period, was interested in the Jewish religion. She had heard much of our Lord and His teaching, and aware of the animosity of the Jewish rulers toward Him she was concerned for His safety. That night her anxious thoughts had shaped themselves into a troubled dream; and when she awoke and found her husband gone and learned that he had been summoned to try Him on a capital charge, she was alarmed and penned a hasty message of warning. It was a well meant intervention, yet it proved fatal to our Lord. It took Pilate some time to peruse the note and consider it, and the Priests and Elders had turned the interval to account. They mingled with the throng, and warned them of the governor's cunning attempt to interfere with their liberty of choice. Presently he looked up and repeated his question: "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you—Jesus bar Abba or Jesus the Christ?" To his dismay they shouted "Bar Abba," and would take no denial. "Let Him be crucified!"

There was nothing for it but that he should pass sentence. Ill at ease, knowing how base a part he was playing, he vainly disclaimed responsibility by washing his hands after the symbolic fashion of ancient days (cf. Dt. xxi. 6; Ps. xxvi. 6). "I am innocent," said he: "see ye to it." And they light-heartedly accepted the responsibility. "His blood," they cried, "be on us and on our children," never dreaming how terribly their imprecation would be fulfilled forty years later when their city was invested by the Roman army, and the starving wretches who crept forth in quest of food, were taken and crucified around the walls until, in the grim phrase of the Jewish historian, "ground was lacking for the crosses and crosses for the bodies."

SCOURGING AND MOCKERY

xxvii. 27–30

27 *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the *common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.*

28 *And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.*

29 *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!*

30 *And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.*

WHEN Pilate, seated on his tribunal at the gateway, had thus pronounced sentence, our Lord was handed over to the soldiers, and they conducted Him "into the Prætorium" (R.V. marg.) or, as St. Mark (cf. xv. 16) has it more precisely, "into the courtyard" of the Prætorium. And what did they do with Him there? It was customary that a criminal condemned to crucifixion should be scourged ere he was led away to execution. The scourge, "the horrible scourge" as Horace styles it, was a fearful instrument—not a mere whip but a knout of several thongs, each loaded with sharp studs of bone or metal and armed at the tail with a hook; whence it went by the nickname of a "scorpion" (cf. 1 Ki. xii. 14). The victim was bound face downward to a whipping-post, and the scourge was plied on his naked back and shoulders, cutting at every stroke, as we read in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, "to the veins and arteries so that the mechanism of the flesh was visible." When they were done with him, he was dripping with blood, and sometimes he was dead when they unbound him.

Our Lord endured this frightful ordeal, and since He was

* Or, *governor's house.*

condemned for treason, mockery was added. The whole garrison gathered in the courtyard from the castle hard by to enjoy the sport. In derision of His claim to be "the King of the Jews" they enacted a mock coronation. Over His bleeding shoulders they cast a royal robe—"a scarlet robe" according to St. Matthew but "purple" according to St. Mark (xv. 17) and St. John (xix. 2). There is no disagreement here; for Pliny tells us that the true Tyrian dye was "the colour of clotted blood," darkening or brightening as it caught the light. The point is that it was a royal mantle, doubtless the "gorgeous robe" wherewith Herod Antipas had derisively invested Him a little ago when, as St. Luke relates (cf. xxiii. 6–11), Pilate remitted Him to the Tetrarch in the hope of ridding himself of the case. From the fuel-stack in the courtyard they took twigs of the *sidr*, that thorn-tree which abounds in the Jordan valley, and weaving a chaplet set it on His head; they put a reed in His right hand in lieu of a sceptre; and they knelt before Him in feigned homage. And then they spat upon Him, and one of them snatched the reed and beat Him on the head, driving the thorns into His brow.

THE CRUCIFIXION

xxvii. 31–56

31 *And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*

32 *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross.*

33 *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,*

34 *They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

35 *And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*

36 *And sitting down they watched him there;*

37 *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

38 *Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.*

39 *And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,*

40 *And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

41 *Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,*

42 *He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*

43 *He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now, if he will have him : for he said, I am the Son of God.*

44 *The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.*

45 *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.*

46 *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?*

47 *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.*

48 *And straightway one of them ran, and took a spunge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.*

49 *The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.*

50 *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

51 *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent ;*

52 *And the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,*

53 *And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many,*

54 *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

55 *And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him :*

56 *Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.*

WHEN they were weary of the brutal sport, they addressed themselves to the work of crucifixion. Our Lord was not the only victim that morning. Two others shared His doom, two thieves or rather "brigands" like Bar Abba. They were doubtless the latter's accomplices, and but for the

miscarriage of Pilate's appeal to the rabble he and not our Lord would now have been their companion on the *Via Dolorosa*. The place of execution was a knoll outside the Damascus Gate, on the north side of the city, called from its configuration *Golgotha* or "The Skull," in Latin *Calvaria*. The custom was that a *cruciarius*, as the victim of crucifixion was called, should carry his own cross; and the soldiers laid the ghastly gibbet on our Lord's tortured back and conducted Him through the city, escorted by a coarse rabble eager to feast their eyes on the inhuman spectacle. "He went forth," says St. John (xix. 17 R.V.), "bearing the cross for Himself." He was sorely exhausted, and "as they came out" or rather "as they were going forth" from the gate of the city, He succumbed. Tradition says that He fell beneath His burden; and His guards, looking about for one whom, according to military law (cf. v. 41), they might "compel" or rather "commandeer" for the service, espied a North African Jew named Simon who had come to the Feast from his home at Cyrene where there were numerous Jewish settlers (cf. Ac. ii. 10). He was a sturdy man; and they commandeered him and laid our Lord's cross on his broad shoulders. Nothing more is recorded of Simon, but it were indeed a bitter irony if the man who carried the Saviour's cross missed the grace which it procured; and doubtless he became a disciple. At all events, he had two sons (cf. Mk. xv. 21), Alexander and Rufus, who from the Evangelist's mention of them as familiar to his readers were manifestly believers; and possibly Rufus is that friend of St. Paul whose mother showed motherly kindness to the Apostle in after days (cf. Rom. xvi. 13).

Crucifixion was a dreadful doom. An invention of that cruel race the Phœnicians, the Romans had borrowed it from the Carthaginians during the Punic Wars, but they prohibited its infliction on the sacred person of a Roman citizen, reserving it and the torture of the scourge for slaves and the vilest of provincial criminals. The victim's outstretched hands were nailed to the cross-beam, and the weight of his body, which else would have torn them, was supported as on a saddle by a projecting peg, the "horn" as it was termed. And thus the wretches hung, fevered with pain and parched with thirst,

sometimes, unless the end were mercifully hastened, as long as two days ere they died. The torture was unspeakable, insomuch that, when the Romans would express the uttermost anguish, they derived a word from *crux*, "a cross," and called it *cruciatus*, whence our word "excruciating."

It is no marvel that the Jews not merely resented the heathen tyrant's infliction of the *servile supplicium* upon their people but, imbued as they were with the humane spirit of their sacred law, abhorred its cruelty; and there was at Jerusalem an association of kindly ladies who, taking as their motto that ancient scripture (Pr. xxxi. 17) "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul," charged themselves with the office of preparing for worthy sufferers a merciful anæsthetic, a mixture of wine and various narcotics (cf. Mk. xv. 23). The benignant draught was presented to our Lord, and He eagerly grasped it; but hardly had He put it to His lips when He declined it. Wherefore? Amid the pain of his last illness Dr. Samuel Johnson determined to take no more physic, not even opiates; "for," said he, "I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded." But surely it was another consideration that now moved our Lord. As He put the cup to His lips, He observed the two brigands eying it wistfully. For those ruffians outside the pale of sympathy no numbing potion had been provided; and He would not accept a relief which was denied to His companions in misery.

When they had nailed His hands to the cross-beam and hoisted it on the upright, and had fixed to the extremity of the latter above His head a placard bearing His name and His offence, the soldiers, according to the ancient fashion which persisted among ourselves in quite recent times when a criminal's garments were recognised as the hangman's perquisites, apportioned His garments among themselves, and seated themselves round the cross to keep guard lest, as sometimes happened, a rescue should be attempted. As He hung in agony, He was taunted not only by the coarse rabble but by the Chief Priests who, forgetting their dignity, had come thither to witness His despatch and exult in their triumph. And the two brigands hanging beside Him on either hand joined in the chorus, after

the manner of wretches in their plight, in the hope of placating their executioners. St. Luke tells (xxiii. 39–43) how one of them presently relented, and in due course we shall learn the reason of St. Matthew's silence regarding this moving incident.

It was "the third hour" (cf. Mk. xv. 25), that is, 9 a.m., when He was crucified, and at noon a dense haze overspread the landscape, portending in that volcanic region the approach of an earthquake. It cast an awe upon the rude assemblage, and they molested Him no more. At 3 o'clock the hush was broken by a cry from His lips: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.* It was the opening sentence of that ancient psalm (xxii. 1) where a sufferer pours out the anguish of his desolate heart: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" In that distressful hour for the first and only time in His earthly life He doubted God. It was not, as theologians have conceived with monstrous though unmeant impiety, that God was wroth with His Beloved Son, never surely so well beloved as in that hour of obedience even unto death, and indeed deserted Him, pouring upon the Sin-bearer's head the penalty of the whole world's transgression. Amid the torture of His frail humanity He lost for a moment His grasp of the Father's will, that serene trust in the Sovereign Purpose which had nerved Him hitherto at every step of His painful progress; and He experienced, even He, the awful desolation which in days of darkness has wrapped the soul of many another, like the saintly William Cowper, dear to God. And this He suffered that we may have comfort in following Him on the dread road.

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and Father:
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, "My God, I am forsaken!"

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation!
That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a vision.

That Hebrew sentence was unintelligible to the Roman soldiers. They caught the words *Eli, Eli*, and, taking them

for the familiar name Elias, they supposed that He was invoking the aid of a friend so called. It was just then that, fevered with anguish, He moaned "I thirst!" (cf. Jo. xix. 28); and His misery moved one of those rough men to compassion. They were provided for their refreshment with a jar of the sour, cheap wine nicknamed "vinegar," and this he seized and, extracting the sponge which served as a stopper and fixing it on the end of a reed or rather a "javelin," as St. John (cf. xix. 29) with his fuller knowledge has it more precisely according to the correct reading, he held it up moist and dripping to the parched lips, despite the jeers of his comrades. "Let be!" they cried. "Let us see if Elias is coming to save him." A simple act of humanity, yet it was precious to our Lord. It was the last kindness He ever received, and it chased away the gloom which had enwrapped His soul. He saw in that deed of pity a gleam of the Eternal Love, and He leaned thereon. "Father," said He in the language of another psalm (xxxi. 5), "into Thy hands I commit My spirit" (cf. Lk. xxiii. 46). Then with a loud cry He died; and St. John tells us what His cry was (cf. xix. 30): "It is finished!" It was a cry of victory.

'Tis finish'd—All His groans are past;
His blood, His pain, and toils
Have fully vanquishèd our foes,
And crown'd Him with their spoils.

'Tis finish'd—Legal worship ends,
And gospel ages run;
All old things now are past away,
And a new world begun.

Our Lord's cry was still ringing in the ears of the awe-stricken spectators when the solid earth rocked and quivered beneath them. It was the dreaded earthquake, and they dispersed in terror and returned to their homes (cf. Lk. xxiii. 48). Naturally the chief havoc was wrought in the close-built city, and one mischance made an especial appeal to the popular imagination. The Sanctuary in the inner court of the Temple was shaken; and by reason, it is traditionally alleged, of the shattering of the lintel from which it hung the Veil, the gorgeous

curtain dividing the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, that secret shrine which none but the Chief Priest might enter, and even he but once a year, "not without blood" (cf. Heb. ix. 7), was rent in twain. To the disciples, viewing it in the light of after events, it justly seemed no mere mischance. They recognised it as a symbol of the opening of a way of access into God's presence, a new and living way consecrated by the blood of the Saviour's sacrifice for the sin of the world (cf. Heb. x. 19–22).

Calvary was not wholly deserted when the panic-stricken crowd dispersed. The soldiers stood by their post, and a feeble company of disciples—devoted women, especially Mary the Magdalene, Mary the mother of the Apostle James the Little (cf. x. 3), and Salome the mother of James and John (cf. Mk. xv. 40)—who had followed the dear Master thither and had stood all those sad hours watching the tragedy, now drew near the cross. They heard the talk of the soldiers, and one thing they remembered—a comment of the centurion, the officer in command of the company, on the scene which they had witnessed. "Truly," said he, "this *was* 'the Son of God.'" It was a Messianic title, and he had heard it applied to our Lord in the course of the long controversy. Ignorant of its Jewish significance, he took it in heathen fashion as an ascription of divinity, and he confessed its truth.

HIS BURIAL

xxvii. 57–61

57 *When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:*

58 *He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.*

59 *And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,*

60 *And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.*

61 *And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.*

IT was customary for the bodies of criminals who had suffered the doom of crucifixion to be cast into Gehenna, that loathsome depository of the city's refuse outside the southern wall (cf. v. 22), unless they had friends who would wait upon the governor and purchase permission to remove them and give them decent burial. So it must have happened in our Lord's case, since even had they dared to risk the displeasure of the Jewish rulers, none of His disciples could have paid the price. But a friend unexpectedly appeared—Joseph of Arimathæa, the ancient Ramathaim-Zophim (cf. 1 Sam. i. 1). He was a disciple of our Lord but, as St. John explains (cf. xix. 38), "a secret one for fear of the Jews." And little wonder, since he was "a councillor" (cf. Mk. xv. 43; Lk. xxiii. 50), that is, a member of the Sanhedrin, and he had been restrained not merely by cowardice but by loyalty to his office from owning allegiance to one who lay under the censure of the august court. But the scene in the council-chamber that morning had forced him to decision (cf. Lk. xxiii. 51), and not only him but a like-minded colleague, the good Nicodemus (cf. Jo. xix. 38–42);

and now when they saw the Lord done to death, they resolved to make what amends they could. It was too late to gladden His heart by open confession of their faith, but they would rescue His sacred body from insult and give it reverent burial. Like other wealthy citizens Joseph owned a garden on the slope of Mount Olivet close to Calvary (cf. Jo. xix. 42); and there he had constructed a private sepulchre—a vault, after the eastern fashion, hewn out of the rock. How better could he honour the homeless Man of Sorrows, despised and rejected of men, than by swathing His mangled corpse in clean linen and laying it where his own dust and his children's would rest?

It was indeed beautiful amends that those two good men made for their tardiness in confessing Him, but better far had no amends been needed. "Oh, the anguish of that thought that we can never atone to our dead for the stinted affection we gave them, for the light answers we returned to their plaints or their pleadings, for the little reverence we showed to that sacred human soul that lived so close to us, and was the divinest thing God had given us to know!" The two Marys aided in the mournful task of laying the dear Master in the sepulchre, happier far than those two wealthy councillors in that, though they had no wealth to lavish on His senseless clay, they had no bitter regret for love withheld when love was needed.

THE RESURRECTION

xxvii. 62–xxviii

62 *Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate.*

63 *Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.*

64 *Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.*

65 *Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.*

66 *So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.*

1 *In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.*

2 *And, behold, there *was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*

3 *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:*

4 *And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.*

5 *And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.*

6 *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

7 *And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*

* Or, *had been.*

8 *And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.*

9 *And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.*

10 *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*

11 *Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.*

12 *And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,*

13 *Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.*

14 *And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.*

15 *So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

16 *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*

17 *And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.*

18 *And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

19 *Go ye therefore, and *teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

20 *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

HERE is the story of that miracle of miracles, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the most amazing yet, for all who duly appreciate the manifold evidence documentary and experiential, the surest event in human history. The story as told here is indeed a testimony of

* Or, *make disciples*, or, *Christians of all nations*.

exceeding value; yet it abounds in difficulties which present themselves to the mind of every attentive reader and, unless justly weighed, constitute a sore stumbling-block to faith.

Consider first that story (xxvii. 52, 53), properly belonging to this section, of the shattering of the tombs by the earthquake and the raising of many bodies of the saints which had fallen asleep. It perplexed St. Augustine, and in one of his epistles (clxiv) he mentions the difficulties which were felt regarding it in his day. The chief is that if those saints were raised when our Lord died on the cross, then, since it was not until the third day after that He was raised, their resurrection preceded His, and thus He was not "the first-born from the dead" (Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 5), "the first-fruits of them that are asleep" (1 Cor. xv. 20). Then what of that story of the Chief Priests and the Pharisees, that is, the Sanhedrists, obtaining a military guard to watch the sepulchre (xxvii. 62–66)? Like the last it is told by St. Matthew alone; but St. John tells of another visit which "the Jews," signifying in his parlance the Jewish rulers, the Sanhedrists, paid to Pilate and another request which they made of him (cf. xix. 31). This was that, since it was "the Preparation," that is, Friday, the day preceding the Jewish Sabbath, our Lord and His two companions in suffering should be despatched by the customary *coup de grâce* of the *crurifragium* or "leg-breaking," that their bodies might be forthwith removed and not left hanging to desecrate the Sabbath (cf. Dt. xxi. 22, 23). It is difficult to conceive of the rulers visiting the governor twice on different errands. And moreover, whereas St. John puts their visit on the Friday between our Lord's death at 3 p.m. and sunset when on the Jewish reckoning the Sabbath began, St. Matthew puts it on the Sabbath, "the day following the Preparation." Not only would it then have been too late, since the desecration had already begun, but the Chief Priests and more especially the scrupulous Pharisees would hardly have desecrated the Sabbath by engaging in the business of negotiating with the heathen governor and sealing the stone. And above all, it is, as we have already seen (cf. iii. 17) and shall see more largely hereafter, contrary to the law which, according to the Scriptures

ever regulates a spiritual manifestation, that unenlightened heathen soldiers should have beheld with their natural eyes the angel visitant to the sepulchre (cf. xxviii. 4).

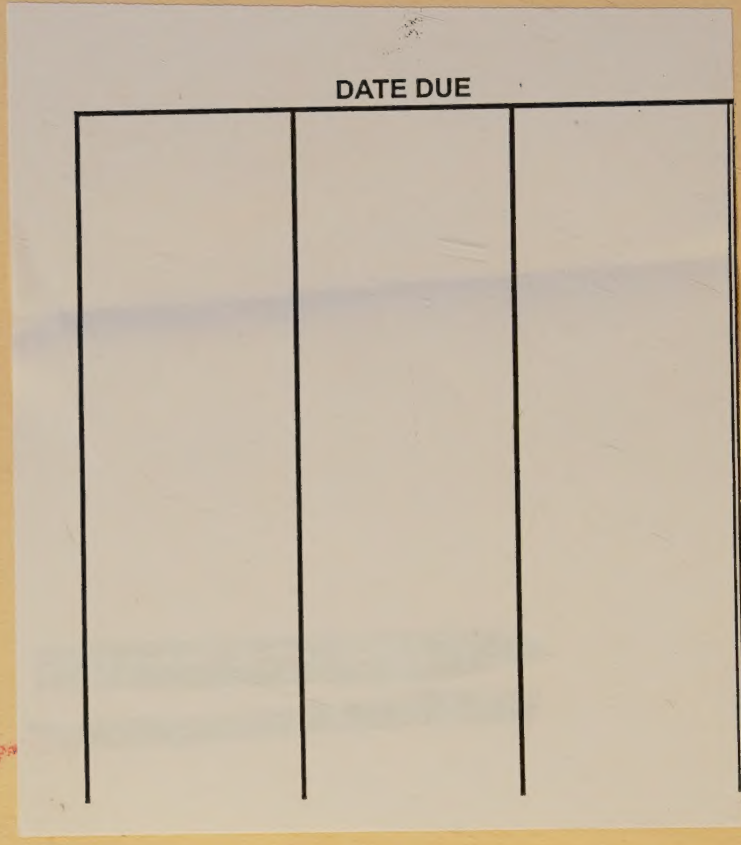
Furthermore, where the narrative coincides with the other Gospels, it abounds in discrepancies. Consider the following: (1) According to St. Matthew (xxviii. 1), when the women visited the sepulchre, it was "in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn" or rather "late on the Sabbath when it was drawing on toward the first day of the week" (that is, on the Jewish reckoning, at nightfall); according to St. Mark (xvi. 2) it was "very early in the morning the first day of the week, at the rising of the sun"; according to St. Luke (xxiv. 1) "very early in the morning"; and according to St. John's precise statement (xx. 1) "very early, when it was yet dark." (2) According to St. Matthew their errand was "to see" or rather "behold the sepulchre"; whereas according to St. Mark (xvi. 1) and St. Luke (xxiv. 1) it was to embalm the Lord's body—an office which, St. John expressly states (xix. 40), had already been performed in their presence by Joseph and Nicodemus at His burial on the Friday evening. (3) According to St. Matthew it was after the women's arrival that the angel descended and rolled back the stone in their presence; according to St. Mark (xvi. 3, 4) and St. Luke (xx. 2) it had on their arrival already been rolled away. (4) According to St. Matthew there was only one angel; according to St. Luke (xxiv. 4) and St. John (xx. 12) there were two.

What then is the reason of a confusion so inextricable and at the first glance so discomfiting? Consider the primitive situation. The Resurrection of our Lord was a transcendent miracle. The body which He brought from the sepulchre was indeed the same which He had worn in the days of His flesh, but it was transfigured. In St. Paul's phrase it was no longer "a natural" or "earthly body" but "a spiritual" or "heavenly body," fitted, as our bodies shall be when like His they are raised incorruptible, for that Kingdom which "flesh and blood cannot inherit." It was imperceptible by natural sense; and therefore it was that when the Risen Lord was manifested, it was "not to all the people but to chosen

witnesses" (Ac. x. 41), qualified for an experience so transcendent by the purging of their spiritual vision, the withdrawal from their hearts of the veil of sense. Conceive how they would surely be affected by what thus befell. They would tell that they had seen the Lord, but according to one of His "unwritten sayings," that admonition "My mysteries are for Me and the sons of My house," they would reverently refrain from enlargement on a wonder so solemn to themselves and so incomprehensible to such as had never beheld it, after the manner of the Apostle who in telling of his rapture to Paradise durst not repeat what he had heard there—"unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (cf. 2 Cor. xii. 4). Their hearers felt nothing of the awe which sealed their lips, and their testimonies to the ineffable revelation vouchsafed them would be curiously canvassed, and as they passed from mouth to mouth, would inevitably be elaborated and particularised.

And precisely this we actually find in the sacred narratives. The common basis of our earliest Gospels, the three Synoptics, is the apostolic tradition of our Lord's ministry, beginning with His Baptism and ending with His Crucifixion. None of the three Evangelists had been an eye-witness, not even the first; for he was not the Apostle Matthew but a disciple of his who wrote in his master's name (cf. Introduction, p. xvi). And so they knew of the Resurrection only by the general report; and this is the reason why their narratives are here so fragmentary and inconsistent. In reading these it is as though we were mingling with the undistinguished multitude of believers, the plain men and women who had known the Lord while He dwelt here, and listening to their talk about the marvel which had happened in their midst, "unheard because their ears were dull, unseen because their eyes were dim." And their talk, vague and inaccurate though it be, constitutes an incontrovertible evidence of the actuality of the Resurrection; for how could such stories have gone abroad and been believed without occasion? But happily these are not the sole evidences vouchsafed us. It pleased God that presently the authentic testimonies of eye-witnesses of the Resurrection

should be promulgated and enshrined in imperishable records. St. Luke, the latest of the Synoptists, while making use of the common tradition of our Lord's ministry and the popular report of His Resurrection, was not content therewith. He made diligent research (cf. Lk. i. 1–4), and in the course thereof he encountered two eye-witnesses and learned from their lips the precious story of their meeting with the Risen Lord at Emmaus (cf. Lk. xxiv. 13–35). And then St. John presented his matchless story (cf. Jo. xx, xxi). These are the imperishable archives of our Lord's triumph over death; and in due course we shall contemplate their wonder and glory.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